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THE

DIVINE MASTER.

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LONDON:

JOSEPH MASTERS, ALDERSGATE STREET,
AND NEW BOND STREET.

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Non est alia via ad vitam et ad veram internam pacem, nisi Via Sanctæ Crucis. Ambula ubi vis, quære quodcunque volueris, et non invenies altiorem viam supra, nec securiorem viam infra nisi VIAM SANCTÆ CRUCIS.

De Imit. Christ. lib. ii. c. 12.



TO HIM

FROM WHOSE HANDS HAS BEEN RECEIVED -

The Bread of Life,

AND FROM WHOSE LIPS HAVE BEEN HEARD

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It may be advisable to explain, in a very few words, that it is not intended in the following pages to give the history of an individual in the person of "the Child," who is represented as receiving instruction from "the Divine Master," but simply to illustrate, under this convenient form, the various trials and difficulties, incidental to the progressive stages of the Spiritual Life. Yet whilst it may indeed be hoped, through GoD's mercy, that no one person could, in the course of their earthly probation, be subject to all the temptations and errors herein recorded, it is certain, at the same time, that none, whose warfare is with the world, the flesh, and the Devil, would ever be exempt from the whole of them; and it is equally sure, on the principle which teaches, that if a man fail in one jot or tittle of the Law, he hath failed in all—that no Christian Grace can have been mentioned here, which the members of CHRIST'S Church are not bound zealously to labour for, under all the different phases of their heavenward course.

It must also be understood, that the term "Child" has not been adopted as applying to the Lambs of the Blessed Fold, for whom most of the sorrowful evils here described must still be unknown dangers; but in acknowledgment of the deep truth which was set forth on that day when a Babe was placed in the midst by a Hand Divine, that there are none, however lofty in intellect, or wise in this world's knowledge, who shall ever enter into the Kingdom of God, except they do indeed receive it in the spirit of a little child.

LENT, 1852.



CHAPTER VI

THE WAY OR THE CROSS IN PERSONAHAMA

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14.



The Divine Master.

CHAPTER I.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS.

The Bibine Master. My child, hearken unto Me; for thou art set upon the threshold of thy mortal life within an evil world, and this is not thy rest. The home that I have purchased for thee, with My Blood, is in a land that is very far off, and the path that leadeth thereunto is dark and difficult: dangers beset thee on every side. Thy threefold enemies, the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, keep watch around thee night and day; and with desire have I desired, to lead thee safely to that Haven where thou wouldest be: for many shall seek to enter there, and shall not be able.

Child of Mine Agony, for whom My soul hath travailed in suffering and in woe, hast thou considered well, that there is none other way, whereby thou mayest reach the delightsome mansions of My Father's House, save only the way of the Holy Cross?

The Child. I have considered it, beloved Master; for I remember the words Thou spakest when Thou didst yet tabernacle in the flesh,-"He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me;" and, "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." I am content to do it, O my God, if by any means I might attain unto the Resurrection of the Just; for I know that our life is but as a vapour, so soon passeth it away, and we are gone; and I will not be of those who, looking not beyond it, walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet themselves in vain. I know the fleeting joys of this fair world, could never stay the yearning of my deathless soul, for it is athirst for God, yea, even for the Living GoD; and in Thy Love, Thy present and eternal Love, alone, can be the satisfaction of my being, and the fulness of joy for evermore. Therefore will I now embrace Thy Blessed Cross, and say, "This shall be my rest for ever!"

Bivine Master. It is well, My child; yet take

heed that, whilst thou art forward to promise with thy lips, thy heart deceive thee not; see thou that it faint not within thee, when I come to lay it bare, stripping it of every earthly hope and wish, whose weight might clog thee on thy way. Art thou very sure that thou knowest what it is, in deed and in truth to bear My Cross? for there are many on the earth who call themselves My disciples, and profess to carry it within their arms; but the token which they wear, although it hath the shape and form of a cross, is but a mockery of the stern and deep reality: it is too light to check the wandering of their feet in paths of human pleasure, where the memory of Mine Anguish, or the prospect of My Judgment, is forgotten in the sweet indulgence of the senses. It gives no pain or weariness; it hath no goading sharpness, driving them to labour as I laboured, night and day, in hunger, cold, and faintness often; it hath no piercing power to cut into their very souls, and drag the loathsome sins, from their concealed depths, before their weeping eyes, nor crushing weight to lay them in the dust of penitence: rather is it but an ornament, in the sight of that bad world, which hateth Me, yet hates them not; and to themselves a flattering delusion, which leads them, while they seem to follow Me, in ways I never trod, where swift upon their steps are

speeding the Enemy and the Avenger. Beware, My child; draw back thy hand, for it is stretched to take up some such empty symbol. Look where, close within thy grasp, there lies a true cross, heavy, and sharp, and ponderous as was Mine. I will not lay it on thee, for thy life is given thee as a prey, and thou mayest mould it as thou wilt; but by My fainting on the road to Calvary, for love of thee, I bid thee take it up.

Child. Master, when I hear Thy voice, more sweet than the song of angels, Thy Love constraineth me; like unto him whom they compelled to bear Thy burden on that weary way. Thou hast the words of Eternal Life; unto whom else shall I go? Be it done unto me according to Thy will. Yet Thine is a hard saying; open it unto me as Thou wert wont to lighten the ignorance of Thy disciples. Must even the weakest bear the heaviest cross? Are not there some more light, proportioned to my little strength and feeble soul? I thought a cross so like to Thine, was only fit for those, Thy bright, peculiar saints, who walk in highest paths of holiness. If I am all too weak for such a sharp and terrible ascent, may I not humbly follow with a lighter burden on a lower path? It is not given to all to sit upon Thy Right Hand and Thy Left, within Thy FATHER'S kingdom; are there not many who, by Thy holy

Cross, shall joyful enter there, who yet attain not to the loftiest place?

Dibine Master. No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of GoD. Hast thou forgotten the words which I have spoken,-Be ye therefore perfect, even as your FATHER Which is in heaven is perfect; and be ye holy, for I am holy? Said I ever unto any man,-Thus far shalt thou serve Me, and no further? thus far shalt thou purify thyself, and no more? Did I mete out to thee with niggard hand the love wherewith I loved thee, or the Agony wherewith I bought thee? If I had sought to stint the measure of My Atonement for thy sin, what power should have saved thee from the nethermost hell, O child of thankless heart? Darest thou with tearless eyes to speak to Me of those who, owing Me no more than thou dost owe, have sought to pay Me with the uttermost surrender of that life, which thou wouldest share between Me and My enemies? Weep rather, weep in sackcloth and in ashes, that even the imperfect service of thy fellow man doth shame thy black ingratitude; for thou knowest that I loved not them more entirely than I have loved thee, when My Life-Blood was spent for all alike.

Chilv. Oh, Master, spare me! Thy rebuke hath broken my heart. Alas! did I shrink from

watching with Thee but one hour,—this little hour of life,-when Thou didst leave the glory and the blissful rest of Thine Eternal FATHER's Bosom, to weep upon a Human Mother's knees, a homeless Child, for me? Did I seek to spare my body, when each nerve in Thine was wrung with fiercest pangs? or my poor soul, when Thine was so very sorrowful, even unto death, that often Thou, the joy of all created beings, didst deeply sigh and groan within Thyself? But now it shall be so no more: I will leave all, and follow Thee. I will no longer offer Thee but half a heart, when Thine for me was altogether pierced through and through, with that sharp and cruel spear. Only call Thou me; I cannot follow, except Thou draw me after Thee by Thy most loving Voice. Bid me come to Thee, though even, like Thy saint of old, it were upon the whelming waters, the deep, whelming waters of tribulation. Bid me come to Thee, that I may have power to arise and fling away all clogging joys and dreams of earth, as Bartimeus cast aside his garment, when he heard Thy tender call. But, Master, like to him, I too am blind: I cannot see my way. Be Thou my Light; O lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in death. I know not how indeed to bear the cross which Thou dost offer, it seems so great and heavy; I cannot tell/how I shall walk beneath its

weight, though I could have taken up that little one, and found it, as many round me do, an easy task to carry it through life,—yet am I ready. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed. Lead me, guide me, and I shall not wander, though the way be dark and long.

Divine Master. Fear not: they who follow Me shall never walk in darkness. Thy footsteps shall not slip; mercy shall hold thee up when perils encompass thee about, and though the sunshine of this world's joys be dim for thee, in My Light shalt thou see Light. I see thy spirit is willing, though thy flesh is weak; therefore will I teach thee now, what is in truth that way, wherein My Bleeding Feet have trod before: thou canst not miss it, for thou shalt know it soon by the many thorns scattered there, which fell from My sharp, piercing Crown as I toiled on. They are the lesser pangs which men must bear who truly follow Me. But now I speak of the one great offering, which thou must make to Me, of thy whole heart and soul; for the servant is not above his Master, nor the disciple greater than his LORD: and even as I gave Myself for thee, in one sufficient Sacrifice, so unto Me must thy whole self be given. Know then that from that blessed hour, when I did first embrace thee, a helpless infant in the Arms of My Mercy, and buried thee with tender

care in the Baptismal waters, that I might raise thee from them a regenerate being, to live with Me in righteousness, thou hast been pledged to crucify the old man within thee, and utterly to abolish the whole body of sin. Attend unto these words, for in them thou hast the perfect revelation, of that taking up of My true Cross, which thou dost seek to understand; the inward crucifixion, daily, utterly, and ceaselessly, of thine old nature, which is at enmity with GoD, is the sole means whereby thou canst so cling to it, thy only safety and thy only hope, that it be not torn from thy grasp, by the strong powers that work against thee, as thou passest through the waves of this troublesome world. Now concerning crucifixion, to whom so fitly couldst thou come to learn its nature as to Me, the Crucified? look then upon My Body, stamped by its awful marks for ever, and read the truth respecting it, which men so shrink from learning. Say first, if My Torn and Bleeding Form doth not speak to thee, of the extreme of mortal agony, and can that Spiritual Crucifixion then, of which Mine was the Type, be without sharp, enduring pain? Next tell Me if thou seest one of all My members withholden from the racking torments, Hands and Feet, and Heart, even to the inmost core, were not all given? and so must thou submit each power, and sense

within thee to the bitter discipline. Behold Mine Arms outstretched and fastened down upon that Wood alone: can they grasp at this world's treasures, its good things, or its hopes? so must thine own be nailed back, lest thou shouldst take unto thy bosom the deadly love of earthly joys, of ease, and luxuries, and vanities, till they eating into thy very heart, for ever quench therein thy little spark of Love for Me. This, my child, must be thy Crucifixion,-to take My Will holy and perfect, My Will which is Thy Sanctification, for the one sole law of thy entire being; and forasmuch as this first nature which thou must kill is altogether opposed to it, whereinsoever thou shalt find one thought or word, or deed, one hope, affection or desire, which springs not from the pure resolve to serve Me and Me Only, then must thou take that rebel, though it be entwined with the very fibres of thy heart, and nail it to My Cross, forcing it to yield up its life in pain, whilst thou, released from its corrupt control, dost bend thyself once more to the rule of stern submission. Within and without shalt thou bind thyself to do My Will: within,-by the deep purification of thine heart and soul, and spirit, till every thought be brought into captivity to My obedience, for by holiness alone canst thou look for Me or find Me; without,-by incessant labour for the coming of

My kingdom. Thy feet shalt thou nail down, that they quit not that undefiled way, wherein I walked, for ever ministering to others. Thy hands shalt thou pierce through, to rivet then unto My Work alone. Thy heart shalt thou cu open with a sharp, keen wound, that thou mayes cleanse it from all corrupt affections and desires and so crucified with Me, and dead to Sin, and to the World; bearing indeed My Cross on earth, with Me shalt thou arise, with Me ascend, to dwell for ever and for ever, with My FATHER and thy FATHER, with My God and thy God.

Chilo. Oh thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift, whereby so glorious a reward may be the hope of mortal men. Oh that I might ever live to see Thy Face in Glory. But alas, Good Master, this is indeed a fiery trial which is to try me: how shall I endure to be partaker of such Sufferings as Thine? who is sufficient for these things? like unto Thy disciples, when Thou didst open the way of Righteousness unto the rich young man, I am exceedingly amazed, and am fain with them to cry out, "Who then shall be saved?"

Divine Master. As I answered them, so do I now answer thee; with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Wert thou not made in baptism the Temple of the HOLV GHOST, and doth the Blessed Dove not hover still within thy fainting Soul? take heed that thou blaspheme not: is there aught too great of purity or holiness for God's Almighty Spirit to accomplish? did I bid thee follow Me in thine own strength, when without Me thou canst do nothing? did I ever ask more of any man than I would give him power to perform? have faith, and thou shalt be enabled to say unto the mountain of thy sins and weakness. "be thou removed for ever."

Chilv. My Lord and My God, it is enough: I believe that I can do all things through Him Who strengtheneth me. In Thee will I put my trust, and I shall yet give Thee thanks for the help of Thy Countenance. Lead Thou me on; for Thou alone shalt be my guide even unto death; and now to follow Thee, do I come forth bearing my Cross, as Thou didst come from Pilate's Judgment Hall, bowed down beneath Thine Own.



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CHAPTER II.

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THE WAY OF THE CROSS IN REPENTANCE.

Bibine Master. My child, for whom I watched in anguish many a dreary hour, amid the cold night dews; My child, for whom I was uplifted, naked and marred in shame and spitting, a spectacle to men and angels,—is it thus I find thee, lingering treacherously on the path wherein I bid thee follow Me with steps unfaltering, and a heart strong in its bu ning love,—thus, dragging, slow and far behind thee, the cross to which I bid thee nail thyself, in thoughts, and words, and deeds of daily self-denial, and with a veil cast over thee, that the flattering world may not see thee as thou art—yea, as thou must pray to be, if ever thou wouldest reach My sweet and sinless rest :- even a penitent, soul-stricken, self-abhorrent, crushed beneath a weight of sins, well sifted and brought up to light by thine own hand; a penitent, so

THE DIVINE MASTER.



II. A WILLING HEART.

Seak ye a bross? the bross is theme. Nor doth Love was weary of its pain . Inden J. Marton Aldergate & New Bond St.



humbled at thine own deep defilement, that thou wouldest have all men know thy hatefulness, lest any should increase thy condemnation by speaking well of thee; a penitent, knowing that in thee dwelleth no good thing, and that thou hast no claim, for aught but sternest punishment, save in the shedding of Mine Innocent Blood alone. Thou wouldest not let thy fellow creatures see thee thus, rebellious child, though at My feet thou darest not come in any other guise; but thou hast hidden thy corruption deep within thy heart, where it doth rankle festering; and for thine outward practice, of fair and pleasant virtues, hast been content to win the praise of men. And say, thus veiled, what hath been thy service after all ?--- a grudging, measured offering; just so much as would satisfy thy conscience and thy fears: that conscience dulled by self-indulgence, and distorted by conformity to the world's rule of piety, else had it told thee that this outward, painless service, which robs thee not of one of earth's enjoyments, or of a moment's ease,—this light performance of thy pleasant duties, could never be that hiding of thy life in Me, the Crucified, whereby alone thou canst appear, before the awful throne of Him, in Whose sight the very bright stars are not pure! Hast thou thought the way wherein I walked, bleeding and afflicted, could ever be such soft

treading unto human feet? O, My child, My child! while thou hast dragged thy cross so far behind thee, through the mud and mire of this world's joys and comforts, and still more through its hollow, lax religion, where hath been thy inward crucifixion? Hath it so much as touched thee with its sharpness? Canst thou show Me any wound, within thy self-deceiving heart, which it hath made? Is there one darling hope or wish nailed down on it in bitter pain? Where hath been the arresting of each thought within thy soul, each word upon thy lips, each deed thy hand was set to do, to prove it if it be an offering fit for Me, and if the stain of selfishness or earthly desire was found upon it, straightway slaying it as I was slain? Men have nought to say against thee; no glaring evil hast thou done; but tremble at the thought of all that thou hast left undone. Think on these words which I have said long since,-"If any man serve Me, him will My FATHER honour." Canst thou dare to say, thy service hath been such as He, the Awful in Holiness. could honour?

Child. O, Master, no; at but the thought my very soul sinks down, in terror and in trembling, as though it must expire before that God, Who, by His purity, in truth is a consuming fire! I have sinned, I have sinned, I can feel it now.

Thy words have pierced my heart, and rent the veil that was upon it, hiding it even from myself. I have been like unto one that is in a dream; for the days went by, as I thought, innocently, and I would have scorned any, who said that I was not Thy faithful servant! Yet now I see how, step by step, I have grown colder and more sluggish; so that now I have nought to offer thee, my LORD, save only Thy talent as Thou didst give it me,no less, perchance, but alas! no greater. And now all is dimness and confusion within me, I have so deceived myself, with easy service and stingless selfdenials, that I know not by what means I have fallen, from that first love and zeal, so full of sweetness and of longing, which filled my soul when, at Thy dear command, I took my cross and followed Thee. O that I were, as in months past, as in the days when GoD preserved me, when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness! But turn me again, O my Master, and let Thine anger cease from me; for I know that, as Thy Majesty is, so is Thy Mercy. Unto Thee will I pay my vows once more: to Thee will I return; for Thou dost abundantly pardon. Only show me now wherein I have wandered, that I may take better heed unto my ways; set my misdeeds before me, and my secret sins in the light of Thy Countenance, for Thou tellest my flittings, and all these things are note in Thy book. I thought that I had striven again t sin, though I know I have not yet resisted unto blood, nor unto any suffering; and when I fell, as even then I knew I did full oft, I failed not to repent.

Divine Master. Beware of that repentance, well nigh as easy to thee as the sin itself,—a pen tence which, of its threefold properties, contrition, confession, and restitution, had but the first, an that expressed within thy deceitful heart alone, without a test of its sincerity. Where was the carefulness it should have wrought in thee?-the clearing of thyself, the indignation against thyself the fear, the vehement desire, the zeal, the revenge upon thyself? Nought is more easy than to say, "Father, I have sinned, forgive me!" and to believe, with these few words, the deep corroding poison is washed out from thy guilty soul, "Father, forgive me!" thou dost say, and so to sin again returnest. Is this no repentance to be repented of? And again, what were the sins for which, even after this fashion, thou didst sorrow? Only such as were so great and glaring, thou couldst not choose but see them even with thy wandering eyes; and where hatl been that watchfulness, so needful to the feeble soul, that in Mine hour of dreariest Agony I failed

not to enjoin it,—that watching over all thy senses and thine inmost thoughts,—that stern examination, hour by hour,—that keen, true searching down into the very depths of thy heart and soul, to look well if there be any way of wickedness in thee, and root out all thy secret faults; according as it is written, "Before judgment, examine thyself, and in the day of visitation thou shalt have mercy."

Chilo. Beloved Master, I have indeed forgotten to be watchful. I have had a name that I lived, and been as dead; but now, I pray Thee, strengthen Thou those things which remain, and are ready to die; for lo! Thou requirest truth in the inward parts,—and a deceived heart hath caused me to turn aside,—prove me, try me, teach me to repent, and so shalt Thou make me to understand wisdom secretly.

Divine Master. Repentance is a hard and toilsome work,—a thing as blessed as it is rare; for many there are who trust in it for their acceptance, but few there be which find the way to it. It is no transient feeling, passing as a light mist on the soul, without a sound or token, and having in it no sting, sharp enough to make thee dread a recurrence of the sin which caused it; for knowest thou not how it is written,—"He that washeth himself after the touching of a dead body,

if he touch it again, what availeth his washing? So is it with a man that fasteth for his sins, and goeth again and doeth the same. Who will hear his prayer, or what doth his humbling profit him?" Repentance not to be repented of is a deep and earnest labour, well-nigh the bitterest task which I have given thee to perform as thou comest after Me. Hearken, then, while I instruct thee how it must be accomplished. First, do thou make it thine assiduous toil to ascertain the extent of thy pollution, not merely in a general discernment of sinfulness, but in each individual act, and thought, and word: take thou the perfect rule of My commandments, and judge thyself therein, not by the letter, but the spirit. Look well till thou discover what have been the springs of action in thee; remember that self-deceit is the subtlest weapon whereby the flesh doth war against the Spirit; see thou if in thy very service unto Me, there hath been no motive of vanity or selfishness; or if thou hast not often said, in seeming wisdom, "Such things are not expedient," because to thy subtle heart they were not pleasant. Try thou how far the praise of men hath made thee love My Name better; probe down unto the thoughts and feelings that lie so deep within thy soul, thou scarce dost know of them thyself, and see how far the fair show thou hast made as My disciple hath been a living falsehood. Nor even then alone, however truthful be thy self-examination, canst thou come to know thyself indeed, in all thine innermost corruption, or to hate sufficiently the sins which have seduced thee; thou must have a surer test than thine own biassed mind. If thou alone dost judge thyself, thou wilt be tender to thy soul as a mother to the child she correcteth not unto his hurt; to know the real hideousness of those past sins, thy weak heart craves to forget, thou must learn it in the judgment and the condemnation of another; of one to whom hath been given, in sacerdotal gift, that Holy Spirit which convinceth men of sin. If thou wouldst truly crucify thine evil nature, then, even as I did, Who was all innocent, thou must put thyself unto an open shame. This is what My righteous servant meant when he saith that true repentance will cause thee to take revenge upon thyself; it is a task from which the swelling pride of fallen nature most revolts, yet salutary as the knife that cleanseth out the rankling wound. Thou must tear aside that veil, and show thyself even as thou art to human eyes, humbling thyself for all thine evil trespasses before a fellow man; nor only by the general admission of thy faithlessness and guilt, but as a stern inquisitor against thyself, dragging out with rigorous search each separate act. My child, rightly wilt thou com-

prehend the blessing and the agony of true repentance, when thou hast learnt to say, not secretly in thy deceiving heart alone, "I have sinned," but openly before the eyes of one who shall keenly note each shade of thy deep degradation, "On such a day, at such an hour, I cherished vile and shameful thoughts when all men deemed me pure;" or "spake with mean, deceiving lips, when none misdoubted me;" or "did fair deeds which won me looks of love and praise, when in their hidden springs they came from dark, unholy motives." This do, my child, and not in vain shalt thou cleanse thyself, and wash thy hands in innocency; but so powerfully this discipline shall work in thee a dread of sin, that thou shalt flee from it as from the face of a serpent; for well is it written of it, if thou comest too near to it, it will bite thee,—the teeth thereof are as the teeth of a lion, slaying the souls of men.

Chilo. Beloved Master, Thou dost command indeed a bitter discipline; at last the sharpness of Thy Cross is entering even into my soul! truly have I not known it hitherto! and now should I altogether faint at thought of such an ordeal but that I verily believe to see Thy Goodness in the land of the living. O, my Master, to be with Thee one day in Paradise, like that blest

penitent who reaped the first fruits of Thine Agony, what is there I would not endure! I do so long to come to Thee again, from Whom mine erring feet too far have wandered; I so pine to taste once more the sweetness of Thy Love, that I am all content to prove this sharpest trial, if only by it I may find my way unto Thy Sacred Feet again. O, Master, say if I thus cut with hand unsparing into the deep of my weak heart, wilt Thou look back on me with mercy as of old?

Mercy, I will take thee Home into the very bosom of My Love, my poor lamb, bleeding with self-inflicted wounds: blessed in that hour, shalt thou know, are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Sweet as the sound of gushing waters when one perisheth with thirst shall be the message of forgiveness I will send to thee. I will bid My messenger speak comfortably to thee, telling thee that thine iniquity is pardoned, and that soon thy warfare shall be accomplished. And then O, My child, how beautiful upon the mountains of thy toilsome journey shall seem to thee the feet of him that bringeth unto thee good tidings.

Chilo. Now do I know what stirred thy contrite servant's heart when he cried so longingly, "Thou shalt purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, Thou shalt wash me and I shall be whiter

than snow; Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice." I see Thy Cross must be driven like a sharp sword into the very soul, else can it not divide it from the dust to which it cleaveth, and so let it be. Now in truth, my Master, will I strive in the deep of the inner life to serve Thee, no more with the mouth alone, making confession unto salvation, but with the heart also believing unto righteousness, for without holiness what man shall see Thee, O my LORD?

Bibine Master. Thou sayest well, my child, yet take heed that thou despise not the outward service. because I have told thee it will not avail without a deeper and more searching labour: this shouldst thou have done and not have left the other undone. Herein greatly hast thou erred, that thou hast thought to serve Me, in a life of ease by only fleeing from undoubted sins; a passive service alone hast thou willed to give Me, far removed from the active, energetic toil which I demand. All spiritual good and sacramental gifts thou thoughtest to receive, whilst with the very hands I bid thee pierce, thou gatheredst earth's blessings to thy bosom! But in My House none can eat their Bread in idleness, they must labour for that meat which perisheth not, but endureth unto everlasting life. I told thee thou must work for Me in in-

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ward purification and outward toil among thy fellow-men for the Coming of My Kingdom. Question now thy heart as I have taught thee, and thou shalt see how instead of that hidden cleansing, thou hast rather sought to gain the fair aspect of Christian graces, in the eyes of thy fellow-men; and for the active services a little care thou hast had truly of thine own salvation, but what hast thou ever done to hasten the completion of My Glorious Kingdom which shall be formed of holy souls alone? Yet I have had compassion on thee, I have not left thee in thy lethargy: go now and hasten to redeem the time; the night cometh when no man can work.



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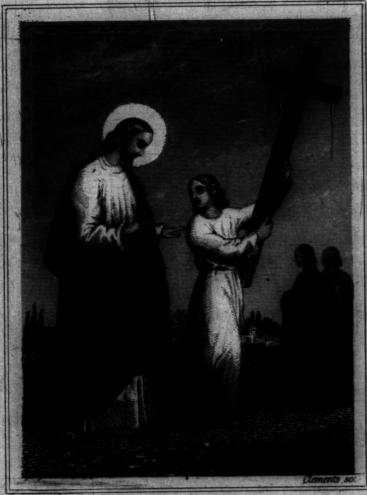


CHAPTER III.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS IN HUMILITY.

Divine Master. My child, rememberest thou the Words I spake when I first called thee unto Me, how I told thee of thy three great enemies, that with untiring labour would seek to pluck thee out of My hand? Thou couldst not bear it then, or I would have shown to thee more fully how bitter was the warfare thou must wage with them: thou wert so newly set within that undefiled way, the Way of the Holy Cross, that thy feet were feeble and tottering upon it as an infant when it assayeth first to walk; but now thou hast a little strength, and I must unfold to thee the snares with which they would surround thee, lest thou be overtaken of their craftiness and subtlety; for know that never in this life can thy conflict with them cease, so soon as thou dost surmount one temptation they will assail thee with another,

THE DIVINE MASTER.



III. HUMILITY.

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and whilst thou labourest for peace, if thou shalt speak to them thereof, they will but make ready to the battle; yet faint thou not at thought of this; remember that I, even I, upon My Glory Throne at the Right Hand of My FATHER, am touched with a feeling for thine infirmities, for I was in all points tempted like as thou art, yet without sin. I will not leave thee nor forsake thee, and who shall harm thee if I am with thee? I will uphold thee in thy goings out and comings in; I will confound thine enemies, only be thou faithful unto death. Know thou that from the first day when thou didst set thy heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, I have been about thy path and about thy bed, to be to thee a strong tower from the face of thine enemies; fear not then, but attend unto My Words while I show to thee the snare that is around thee now, wiling thy soul to deadly peril.

Chilo. Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth. O let it be Thy pleasure to deliver me from all these hidden dangers; do Thou make haste to help me, for Thou sayest truly that my soul is among lions, mine enemies are daily in hand to swallow me up; show me now their craftiness, let me not be ignorant of their devices, for surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird; tell me then, I pray thee, wherein have they digged pits for me, for I thought to walk so closely in Thy Blessed Steps that I left no room for them to come between us, and to lay hold on me; what can I do more, O Thou Preserver of men; have I not left all and followed Thee, and chastened my soul for sin with all the rigour which Thou hast commanded?

Divine Master. Yea, My child, think not I have forgotten thy labour and thy love; I know thy works, how thou hast borne, and hast had patience, and hast not fainted, and for My Name's Sake hast truly toiled; nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast sought to make My Cross a Glory in the world's eyes, which thing I hate. Child, wherefore was I nailed unto it save through thy sin, thy deep degrading sin, which but for the washing of Mine all-purifying Blood had dragged thee down to hell, companion fit for Devils? how is it that I find thee now then raising that solemn Cross aloft in shameless triumph that all men may see-not what I have done for thy salvation—but what thou wouldst do for Me—as though to bear it after Me were a voluntary meritorious service on thy part and not thy one sole refuge from deserved perdition! Shouldst thou not rather bow down beneath it in bitterest shame, knowing that it is a token unto all, how vile, how lost, how hateful in GoD's sight

thou wert, since only the Dire Agony of His Beloved Son, could snatch thee from eternal burnings! Is it not written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree, and was I not made a curse for thee, in order that by this torturing humiliation I might save thee so as by fire only, because of thine utter failing in the bounden duty and service thou didst owe thy Maker, and now wouldst thou dare to make it seem a merit to cling unto that Cross, as though thine endurance of it were a great gift made to Me? What and if I said to thee, "I will have none of thy service or thy gifts; I require them not, Mine are a thousand worlds and all that in them is; take back thine offering and restore to Me My Cross, since thou dost lift it up, not as the one hope of thy last necessity, but as a vaunted oblation made to Me, in generous devotion, which could merit in itself My Love or human praise," where would be thy boasting then if I thus spake to thee?

Chilo. O, Blessed Master, say it not, and cast me not away; for I know indeed it is Thy Cross alone upholds me out of that profound abyss that yawns for me; and I know—I know too well that by mine unassisted will I could not even cling to it—but that I must be even nailed down upon it by the Spirit that subdueth my vile flesh, else should I fall from it into the deepest hell.

Divine Master. Thou sayest truly, but how then hast thou dared to make a boast of it, and been well pleased that men should look into the wounds its sharpness made within thy heart, and note how well-nigh spent thou wert beneath its weight? Yea, art thou sure thou hast not laboured more abundantly that they might marvel at thy zeal? Thou hast loved to hear it said how truly thou dost bear My Cross, how utterly thy neck was bent unto its yoke; how even the beatings of thy heart were crushed beneath its weight, and yet thou knowest well thou never couldest have had the strength, nor even the wish, to lift it so much as from the ground, had I not constrained thee by My Love. I took thee first in Holy Baptism, or ever thou hadst heard My Name; when thou wert yet in all thy sins, and sealed thee with its sign, and showed thee how to bear it through his life; but then had I left thee to thyself, too surely hadst thou trampled it beneath thy sacrilegious feet; and even now I tell thee, but for its redeeming power, there is sin enough in each of thy best deeds to sentence thee to exile from My FATHER'S House for ever. But I spare thee-for this is the snare of which I told thee—the very subtlest which thine enemies can lay for thee; the flesh, the world, and the devil each have alike their share in weaving its toils about thy soul; it is the w

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deep temptation with which they ever seek to ruin those of My faithful servants, who will not be deterred from following after Me. By this crafty peril do they encompass them about, when grosser arts have failed to make them love the world, or their own ease and comfort more than Me; and its great danger lies in this, that they are chiefly unaware of it who most are tempted to it.

Most Holy Master, blinded to my own peril; for even now my heart condemns me, pierced by Thy searching Words; unfold to me, I pray Thee, wherein this spiritual vanity hath overtaken me. Alas, and hath this plague spot been in all my feasts of charity, when bowed upon Thine altarsteps, my LORD, I thought to love Thee so humbly and so well!

Bitine Master. Marvel not at this, My child, for in these days when all men know Me, and My Name is great among the Gentiles, this is the special trial wherewith the Accuser of My brethren doth seek to win them to destruction. Thou knowest that when I went unto My FATHER from this world, I left Mine own to suffer persecution and to be hated of all men for My sake; their portion was to bear My reproach on earth; and whilst their bodies were delivered up to scourge and sword, their souls were pierced through with

the bitter contempt and mockings of their fellowmen. But they rejoiced and were exceeding glad to be thus hated and tormented; they leapt for joy when they were driven from among their brethren and reproached, and their name cast out as evil, for they knew that great was their reward in Heaven; and so through fire and strife they won their way unto My FATHER'S Home of Rest. Now when the Prince of this world saw how mightily My Word grew and prevailed amid all persecution and contumely, and that the blood of the Martyrs was in truth a fructifying stream, causing the earth to bear much fruit unto My Glorious Kingdom; he sought by other and by subtler means to stay the progress of My great salvation. Knowest thou what he did? He taught the world to smile upon the Cross, but never to weep for sin; he caused the semblance of a holy life to be a passport unto man's esteem, so that many for whom I died, assume the garb of righteousness, with rank ambition, pride, and worldly lusts all swelling in their hearts, and trumpet forth My Name that they may have it answered back to them in human praises. Rememberest thou the words with which I greeted him who came at dead of night with swords and staves to take Me-"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" So is it with this geneW-

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ration; they do betray Me utterly, day by day leading Me away to be crucified afresh in thoughts and words, and deeds of sin, and yet all the while seeming to kiss My very Feet, in open-mouthed assertions of their love for Me, and outward acts of piety. Again, there be some less false than these, who do bestow on Me the traitor's kiss, and yet are all unconscious of their treachery; such, are those of My disciples who have desired with a heart sincere, to follow Me upon the narrow way, and whose one thought at first hath been to offer unto Me an undivided service; but when they found how on that very path soft flatteries awaited them, and that not only their true devotion was admired of men, but that the holy and the good whom they themselves revered, were drawn to them in gentlest sympathy, then hath a taint crept into all their offerings made to Me; it hath no more been done in singleness of heart to gain the unseen light of My sole favour, but, unknown to themselves, there was in all they did for Me, a silent seeking to be thereby exalted in the eyes of men, and so My Cross, which should have been so deeply hidden in their souls, has been made by them a stepping stone into the world's esteem.

Child. And I have been of these, My LORD! I knew it not, but now Thy words reveal me to myself. I feel that whensoever my open love and zeal for Thee hath won me praise, or most of all the friendship and the care of those who were in truth Thy servants, then have I taken much delight therein, and been stirred up to do great things before their eyes, still deeming I was following Thee alone; but now, O Holy Master, Thou art the Truth, enlighten my dull soul, I pray Thee, and show me in what toils I have been taken, for the snare is so subtle that I have been caught by it unawares.

Divine Master. Needful is it indeed that thou shouldest examine it most narrowly, for thou mayest remember how I said of old, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you;" and thou knowest that heaven and earth shall pass away, but not My words. And now will I show to thee some of the avenues whereby this deadly thing, this spiritual vanity hath entered into thy consecrated soul. First it hath been in this, that thou hast forgotten how by the very principle of thy new birth, the life thou didst then receive must be HIDDEN in Me: nor ever must thou dare to draw it forth before the eyes of men, save when by such a revelation thou canst not doubt to benefit their souls; wrest not, as many have done, that Scripture to thy destruction, wherein I said, "Let your light so shine before men;" . . . for I willed that by good works done silently, and with a deep

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humility thy light should shine, and not by voluntary manifestation of thyself and of thy love to Me—that voiceless, holy love, that should be kept as a pure and virgin offering sacred to Mine eyes alone, and which is at once profaned, if human thoughts and motives do find an entrance to it. Thy chief temptation in this matter, is that thouhast yielded to the craving of thy mortal nature, for the sympathy of thy fellow-creatures; and when the workings of thy life in Me, produced despondency or joy, thou hast loved to tell thy feelings, and to rouse their wonder or compassion, whilst even in thy ordinary state, it hath been sweet to thee, to tell of all thy communings with Me. Beware of this, My child, for vanity lurketh in every word, and most be thou assured, it hath possession of thee when thou dost display the deepest tokens of humility. Resolve then never to speak to any of thy spiritual condition, save to Mine own anointed servant, whom thou hast chosen as thy Guide, in My Name to watch over thee, and to whom thou hast revealed, as I commanded, thine uttermost depths of sin. He, for thy soul's health, must know the variations of thy state, and scarcely could thy subtlest enemy find means to make thee feed thy vanity, in intercourse with him who knows the miserable details of all thy great corruption; for which reason, amongst

many others, it is well that thou lay bare thine inmost soul before him.

Again, another snare there is for thee in that, which but for man's insidious sin, would be a source of highest good-namely, a union in good works with others of My servants: this doth engender many words and much display, and save where such associations are needful for the advancement of My Kingdom, seek not to mix with others in thy deeds of charity. Be not forward to concert with them, great schemes of good to man, except there be none other to attempt the work; rather do thou a little for My sheep in secret, unseen by all, save Me, Who watched the widow cast her two mites in the Treasury. Thou hast done well in seeking to avoid all intercourse with those who know Me not, except for their own good. But I say unto thee vet more, be not over-anxious for the society even of those who are well known as Mine active servants, unless it be to learn of them unto the profit of thy soul; for if thou mingle with them in much converse as thy own familiar friends, it cannot fail, but thou wilt show to them thy zeal and sufferings in My cause, thy many prayers and tears, and from such revelations do thou shrink as from the searing of hot burning coals.

Solitude is best for thee, where thou canst com-

pare thyself with none save Me, and when in comparison of My purity thy cry will ever only be, "unclean, unclean!" Stand in awe and sin not, commune with your own heart and in your chamber, and be still; there will I come to thee and talk with thee, and whom shalt thou desire more if I am with thee? thou shalt hear My Voice far clearer in the deep silence when no human sound is near. Seek for solitude then as the safest condition of thy feeble soul, yet not so, as to forget that thine outward work, is in the advancement of My Kingdom on this earth. Thou knowest how I prayed for My own that they should be kept in the world; but let this be thy wisdom, to strive wheresoever thou art among thy fellow-men, to attain unto a solitude of spirit. Be thou also very zealous alike amongst My followers and the children of this world, to avoid all singularity in outward things, which could manifest that thou dost hold thyself to be especially My disciple; by thy humble, tender love to others only be it known, but affect not thou to differ from them in external manner or the like. Let thy soul come forth in silence then from among men to be with Me alone; rise up, My child, and come away; hide thee, hide thee in the bosom of My love; withdraw thyself into My shadow, there shalt thou find great delight—there

shalt thou rest indeed, and with thy joy no stranger shall intermingle.

Thee indeed; I will cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils: wherein should he be accounted of me? to Thee will I come in quiet and in sclitude, till they shall say of me, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning on her Beloved." Unto thee only will I seek, with Thee abide till the day break, and the shadows fee away in the Light of the Resurrection Morning.



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THE DIVINE MASTER.



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CHAPTER IV.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS IN THE SACRAMENTS.

Child. Where art Thou, O my Beloved Master? wherefore hast Thou gone from me in the way, and left me desolate? Behold, these many days have I looked for Thee sorrowing, but in vain; and by night upon my bed have I sought Thee, Whom my soul loveth, and found Thee not. Wherefore has it thus befallen me? Surely I have striven to come after Thee? and have I not laboured zealously for these three things which Thou hast taught me to desire in Thy sweet communings with me, -even self-renunciation, bitter repentance, and a true humility? Yet now, I know not why, I cannot see Thee, nor discern Thy loving promises. My soul is dead and cold within me; the very voice of prayer seems taken from me, and mocking whispers tell me I have

never truly found Thee, and that my hope is all delusion. Art Thou not the Good Shepherd? am I not Thy sheep? O, tell me, Thou Whom my soul loveth, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?

Divine Master. I have not left thee, My poor helpless child, but thou hast strayed once more far from Me; though, even in all thy wanderings. Mine Arm hath been around thee, or thou hadst not now been here to call upon Me. Think it not strange that thou hast sought for Me, and found Me not, for thou hast been like unto My disciples of old, and hast gone as it were to seek Me in Mine empty tomb, whence I departed at the break of day; nor hast thou listened to the voice of the Church, that would have said to thee, as did Mine Angel messenger to them, "He is not here; He is arisen." For I truly am arisen, and am gone before thee to the New Jerusalem, which is above; there shalt thou see Me, if thou falter not; but I no longer walk on earth in visible form, to be met at every turn by those who, with unguided steps, go forth to meet Me, each in a path of their own devising.

Child. O, Master, what sayest Thou? how can I follow Thee, if I behold Thee not? Must I mourn as did Thy disciples of old, because whither

Thou goest I cannot come? Surely I thought to cling to Thee so closely, that nought upon this earth could tear Thee from me.' Day by day, and hour by hour, my hope was still to hold Thee by the Feet, and worship Thee; and now what meanest Thou? wouldest Thou say to me, as unto the Jews, "I go My way, and ye shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins; whither I go, ye cannot come?" Hast Thou given me then Thy Cross, and not Thyself,-Thy Cross, bereaved of its Sacred Burden since the eve of that great day of wondrous rest, when Thy thrice blessed servant was allowed to bear Thee in his own new tomb? am I left in dreary desolation, to cry out with her whose great sinfulness I share, and whose deep love I fain would rival,-" They have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid Him?"

Well the voice of thy complaint, and I say to thee,
—as I once said to those, how much more faithful!
—"O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" Hast thou forgotten the words of My sure promise,—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world?" And again,—"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you?" Yea, though I said, "The world seeth Me no more," said I not also, "But ye see Me?" Understand now this matter, and learn that in Me

is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. I have in truth ascended unto heaven. It is good, yea needful, for thee that I should go away to perfect the work of thy salvation, by My continual intercession, as thy great High Priest, before the throne of God. But I have not left Myself without a witness upon earth, and a dwelling-place where Mine own Presence is, and where My Spirit abideth ever. There, if thou seek Me, thou shalt find Me, but nowhere else; there, in My Holy Church,—that is the fold thou desirest, where I make My flock to rest by still waters and green pastures, - there Mine own sheep are gathered, and I feed them day by day; they know My voice, and I give to them Eternal Life, whilst vainly would they seek to come to Me by any other way. Therefore said I truly, that all without this fold is as Mine empty tomb, where My lifeless Body was, but is no longer. For I died indeed for all the world: and so each spot on earth hath known, as it were, the Presence of the Victim slain: but the Risen LORD, the Living. in Whose Life alone, the sons of Adam can live unto eternity, is not there, but is departed, to be with the disciples in their assembling, and to be made known to them in breaking bread.

Chilv. Yea, Beloved Master, as in that won-drous hour when, the doors being shut, Thou

didst come and stand in the midst, and say unto them, "Peace be unto you!" O, how hath my heart burned within me many times, when I have thought upon their rapture at that blissful meeting! how have I pined to be, as it were, amongst them, and to hear Thy most adored Voice thus

whisper peace to my poor struggling soul.

Divine Master. And why then hast thou closed thine ears to it, when I was ready to pronounce it over thee, through the lips of those to whom I have given power to speak and act in My Name? On the earth are there none to whom I said, "Into what house soever ve enter, first say, Peace be to this house; and if the son of Peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall turn to you again?"

Child. Is it for this cause, then, that it hath seemed as though Thy peace came not upon me, because I sought it not, in the way of Thine appointment from those whom Thou hast commissioned to dispense it? Yet I thought, Beloved Master, that the blessings I sought directly from

Thy Hand I could not fail to win.

Bibine Master. My child, I am the same today, yesterday, and for ever; the Word which I have spoken standeth sure. Once for all have I appointed certain channels, whereby My salvation is to be conveyed to man,—certain means by

which it is to be applied to each individual soul; and thinkest thou that, when I have arranged this immutably in My perfect wisdom, I will now consent to grant it unto them in any other way? Thinkest thou that I shall be ready at the call of those who, in their wilful arrogance, do set aside My holy ordinances, to give to them, after their own fashion, the very graces I have for ever linked to visible rites? That which God hath joined, let no man put asunder. Doubtless with Me all things are possible; and if such were My good pleasure, not only could I convey to thee the efficacy of My Atonement, without the ministrations of My Church, to whom alone I have given this power on earth; but I could at once, if I so willed it, translate thee into heaven, like My servants Enoch and Elijah; and thus spare thee alike the life-struggle of thy soul with sin, and that which awaiteth thy mortal part in death. I could do this, and more also, but such is not My will; and therefore, if thou wouldest be saved, seek thou salvation in the way of Mine ordinances, where alone thou canst obtain it.

Child. Thy will be done, Beloved Master; I submit myself to Thy good pleasure, blessed indeed if, by any means, I may but so much as touch the hem of Thy garment, and be whole. But open to me this matter more fully, I beseech

Thee, that I may ever know most surely where to seek and find Thee. How is it that I have strayed so far from Thee? I knew Thy Cross was in mine arms, and on my heart, and so I doubted not that I was following Thee, and only marvelled that Thou wert so hidden from me.

Divine Master. And well it was for thee that thou didst not relinquish thy hold upon My cross, for by this means hast thou drawn Me after thee, to seek thee even in the barren and dry land where no water is, into which thy wandering feet have strayed. And now that I have found thee well-nigh perishing with thirst and hunger, I will lay thee on My shoulders, and bear thee safely back to My true fold.

This, then, hath been thy error:—thou hast beheld Me outstretched upon the altar of My Cross, having completed a full, perfect, sufficient sacrifice and oblation for the sins of the whole world; and seeing that there remained only to have this complete atonement applied to thine individual soul, thou hast thought to accomplish that work by thy single, unassisted efforts. Thou hast sought with thine own powerless hands, as it were, to take Me, the all-sufficing victim from My Cross, and unite thyself unto Me; making thyself to be incorporate in Me by the mere act of thine own will, or of thy faith. Now this thou

canst not do, because I have willed it otherwise. Come, and let us reason together, and I will show thee, from the very root of the matter, wherefore this must be so.

Thou knowest that I, taking compassion on the race of man, who were for ever alienated from their Maker and Sole Good by sin, did once for all offer Myself, through the Eternal Spirit, without spot, unto GoD, that in My sinless humanity all who should be made one with Me might be received into the Bosom of the FATHER, there to abide with Me where I for ever dwell. and thus purged in My Blood from every taint of sin, ineffably joined to Me in Whom even that All-Pure JEHOVAH is well pleased, they are restored to the one only life and joy of their immortal being,—an everlasting union with the Triune God. Thou knowest how many words I spake in the time of Mine earthly sojourning, to show that, except a man be thus in mysterious union made, in very deed and truth ONE with Me, he can in no case be restored to his offended and most just CREATOR. "Abide in Me, and I in you," thus did I speak, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." "No man cometh unto the FATHER, but by Me." "At that day ye shall know that I am in My FA-THER, and ye in Me, and I in you." "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My FATHER will

love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." Yea, except he be in Me. no man could so much as call for mercy, and be heard; for GoD hath said, once for all, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," and this sentence He will not revoke. But when a man is incorporate in Me, Who am altogether sinless, then do I offer his prayers before the Throne of God, as the very cry of My pure human flesh, and they are granted unto him. And now it is most needful that thou shouldst understand the manner in which this union is to be effected. This thou mayest clearly see, for it is by visible means openly discernible even unto thy human eyes; namely, by the Holy Sacraments which I have ordained within My Church for this especial purpose. In the first of these, My Holy Baptism, this union is commenced; therein, by water and the Holy Ghost, thou art born anew into Me, -and into My Life, -a life which is eternal. In the second most glorious Sacrament and Sacrifice, wherein thou dost receive Mine actual Body and Blood, and I do specially offer unto God, on thy behalf, that Oblation of Myself once made upon the Cross, this union is sealed, consummated, and renewed; My Blood from that hour is upon thee, for ever washing away thy sins; and thou, made one with My perfect human nature, mayest come boldly unto

the very Holy of holies, whither I have gone before thee, even unto the Presence of the Eternal God Himself.

Chilo. Thou hast well said, good Master, that this would be plain before my eyes. I knew indeed that, joined to Thy Sinless Body alone, could I hope so much as to pass the gate of Heaven; yea, that from the just wrath of God I must ever hide myself in Thee, and in the wounds which Thou hast opened for my reception; so that He may look upon me only as part of Thee, Who art His Well-Beloved Son, and altogether lovely. But now only, do I begin to perceive how vainly I would have sought to incorporate myself with Thee, by the mere desire of my soul, and exercise of faith, when Thou hast put such plain and palpable means before me.

which hath ruined many. Thou hast thought that thou wert of thyself sufficient for these things; that thou couldst, with thine own right hand, and with thy feeble arm, draw Me down out of heaven to come to thee. Thou hast well-nigh perished in the gainsaying of Core; for thou knowest how he wrested to himself the office of the priesthood, when he had none authority from God, and was utterly destroyed, as though the very earth was moved to indignation, and



opened to swallow him up. Thou hast thought to deal by thine own soul as he did by his people, in the administration of holy things; for thou soughtest, by a spiritual act, to take unto thyself My Body and Blood, which can be given thee by consecrated hands alone.

Yet further must thou understand this matter. I have said that, except thou be in Me, thou art utterly lost; for that even thy very prayers are useless, except I offer them in union with Mine own, and that thou canst be one with Me only through the Sacraments. Now learn that unto these, thou canst not by any means attain, excepting in and through My Church. I alone dispense these Sacraments; but from My hands visibly on earth thou mayest not receive them, because I am gone into heaven, there to appear before the Presence of GoD for thee, and therefore have I commissioned My Priests to act in My Name, and by My Power. For this purpose I have given unto them the gift of the HOLY GHOST, the Third Person in the Godhead; for who less than GoD could give My children second birth in Me, and feed them with My very Flesh and Blood? He, then, the Spirit proceeding from the FATHER and the Son, is with them; so that whatsoever thing they do on earth, in the way of My holy ordinances, is straightway sealed

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by Me in heaven; and to My people it is as though I had Myself, in visible human form, come near to bless them. Thou mayest understand what an awful authority this is with which I have invested My representatives, by the solemn words I uttered in conveying it,-" Receive ye the HOLY GHOST!" I said, and breathed on them, with the same Omnipotent Breath which made the first man Adam to become a living soul, -" Whosespever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained. He that heareth you, heareth Me; he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; he that receiveth you, receiveth Me. As My FATHER hath sent Me, even so send I you." And from that hour have they ministered unto My sheep, and yet do minister with the same power and authority in its degree as I Mine Own Self exercised on earth. They raise the dead from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, by the waters of baptism; they feed the hungry, hungering and thirsting for eternal joy, with My very Body and Blood, even that meat which endureth unto everlasting life; they heal the sick and broken in heart, binding up all their wounds by that ministry of consolation, whereby they say to them, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" day by day, in My FATHER's house, they offer up the sacrifice of praise and prayer: and to all these sacerdotal acts I give an entire efficacy, by My co-operation with them before the throne of GoD on high. Thus do I, through their agency on earth, commence, continue, and complete in Mine own Body, the Church, that union with Me which, as I have shown thee, is alone salvation, and wherein each one who is found in Me becomes, as it were, very flesh of My Flesh, and bone of My Bone. Understandest thou what thou hearest?

Child. Yea, LORD, with what blessedness do I comprehend Thee: all is most plain and clear. Thy voice have I heard indeed, saying unto me, "This is the way; walk thou in it." Only, good Master, I think with terror how many there be who profess to love Thy Name, and yet do sacrilegiously neglect the ministrations of that sanctuary, which truly Thou hast shown me, to be none other than the house of God, the very gate of heaven. I was of such myself, but I did so through ignorance, not wilfully. I know, LORD, that they who seek Thee in the way of Thine ordinances, are indeed the few, and not the many. How shall it then fare with the greater number, if there be none other way? Must all these multitudes perish, O my Master, who look to find Thee elsewhere than in Thy Church?

Divine Master. Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than

his Maker? Leave thou them to Me; I will deal with them as seemeth good to Me.

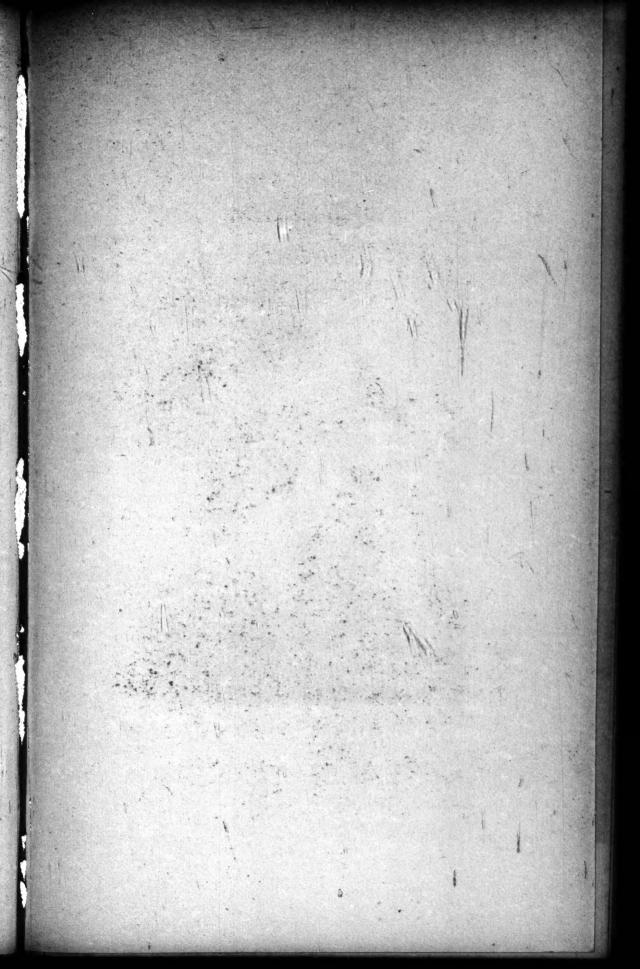
will speak yet but this once. I am troubled concerning this matter, because there are so many who seem to be in truth Thy most devoted servants, unwearied in Thy cause, and who despise not the all-holy Sacraments and the Priesthood, as many do, from wanton love of their own sin; but whose one error hath been that they, like the Jews of old, have stumbled at the doctrine of that temple of Thy Body which Thou hast raised up on earth: these be righteous men, O LORD; wilt Thou destroy them all for lack of knowledge?

Bivine Master. And who shall love them more than I? Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Howbeit, remember the rebuke I gave unto My beloved servant, when he asked Me, "LORD, and what shall this man do?" I answered him as I now answer thee, "What is that to thee? follow thou Me!"

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CHAPTER V.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS IN OBEDIENCE.

Child. Beloved Master, Thou hast dealt very tenderly with me; Thou hast led me on by ways I knew not, and I have proved that, dark and cheerless as they seem at first, they truly are ways of pleasantness, and all Thy paths are peace. It seemed hard at first to quit that shining world of vain delights, when Thou didst bid me come out from earthly hopes and wishes, and be separate. I thought that in the desert there would be no streams to slake my thirst for happiness; and o, Thou hast prepared a table for me in the wil-Gerness; Thou hast fed me with angels' food, and my soul hath been altogether satisfied therewith. When I first lifted up Thy Cross, O LORD, it appeared most heavy to me, and full of bitterness; yet blessed is he that shrinketh not from the load, for when he hath carried it but a little way, how doth he feel, in his inmost heart, that sweet indeed is Thy mercy! But now, most holy Master, my soul is yet a little disquieted within me, and I come once more to sit at Thine adored Feet, to open all my grief, and gain from Thee that loving counsel and divinest comfort, which Thou never dost refuse to those whose longing soul doth hang on Thee for life.

Divine Master. Yea, verily, I am more ready to hear than thou to pray. I do but wait to give thee more, than either thou dost desire or deserve. My love is around thee hour by hour; My care is in every breath thou drawest; I count the beatings of thy heart, and number all thy sighs. To Whom, then, shalt thou turn in all thy wanderings and necessities, save to Me, Whose tenderness for thee was manifest in untold agonies? Open thy mouth wide, then, and I will fill it; pour out all thy heart to Me; unfold thy secret griefs; for I am He That heareth prayer, and to Me shall all flesh come.

Child. O, how gracious art Thou, and merciful, long-suffering, and of great kindness, to them that call upon Thee! Who can declare Thy noble acts, or show forth all Thy praise? Now will I lay me down beneath Thy feet, and tell Thee of my trouble; for sweet as dews upon a thirsty land, the voice of Thy dear counsel falls upon my soul.

Beloved Master, Thou hast plainly showed me that the way of life, and of the Cross, is in Thy holy Sacraments, wherein we do receive Thy very Self, Who art the Way, and Who sufferedst by Crucifixion; in them the Life is given, and not less the Cross. For instead of life, we should receive most fearful death, even our own damnation, if we dared accept of them, without first surrendering ourselves to that entire crucifixion of our evil nature, which Thou hast shown me is essential to salvation; since all who would be one for ever with the Crucified, must be riveted unto His wounded Body by the very nails that pierced Himself. And now it is herein that I am so disquieted: I have sought Thee in the way of Thy Divinest Sacraments, and truly I have found Thee, sweeter to my soul than honey and the honeycomb. Thou hast indeed fulfilled Thy promise, and given me Thyself; but when I too would seek to keep my plighted word, wherein I swore to offer unto Thee, in hourly oblation, my body and my soul, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee, I seem to find no practical means for its accomplishment: to combat sin is not enough. Surely, since Thou hast taken me into Thyself, to be Thine own, all that I have is Thine; and I am bound, with all the powers of my soul and spirit, as well as of my mortal frame,

to labour for Thee day by day. Yet hour after hour flitteth by, and I discern no actual means of serving Thee, my LORD! I lay me down at night, and say, "What have I done for my good LORD this day?" and ever the bitter answer cometh, "Nought! Loaded I am with blessings, and He hath given me all things richly to enjoy, -yea, that which is all in all, Himself! and yet I have not even a little offering in daily toil to make to Him." O, am I not faithless, blessed Master? Shall not my broken vow be more utterly to my condemnation, because to me Thy promises have been so all abundantly fulfilled? I felt not thus at first, when Thou didst so justly rebuke me for my wicked boasting; I thought then I had done for Thee great things, when I did but a little pierce my soul with the pressing of Thy Cross upon my deadly sin; but now that I have known the richness of Thy mercy, the joy of Thy salvation,-now that I have fed upon the sweetness of Thy Presence, in the Blessed Feast of Thine own Flesh and Blood, I tremble and weep to think, that while God Himself is lavished on me, I have not strength or power to rise from my weak idleness, and make Him but the least return.

Bibine Master. Weep, but tremble not, my child; yea weep, that sweeter than all joy and

smiles, may be to thee the Blessed Touch of Mine own loving Hand, when I do wipe those tears away. For thy present grief is of the nature of that mourning which I have called blest, and to which I have promised such exceeding comfort. Salutary are the tears which thou dost shed for thy defection, for thine unwilling slackness in My service, yea, and precious they are unto Mey for they do spring from that deep well of love for Me, which My Pierced Hands have opened in thy soul. And now, fear thou not that they who follow Me should ever walk in doubt; I will soon make thy way plain in this, which hath often been a source of anxious thought unto My faithful servants, even to know in what actual work, from day to day, they might devote their time, their toil, their whole entire life, unto My service.

Understand, therefore, that the way and means thereunto are twofold; first, by the labour which thou must accomplish in thine own soul; secondly, by the work which thou must perform in the world without. Of thine interior toil I have already told thee somewhat; but I would have thee more fully to understand that it is a very and actual labour, wherein thou shalt find weariness of body and soul alike. Thou art Mine own, purchased by Me in My redeeming torture, and taken to My very Bosom in Holy Baptism, that where I am, to all

eternity, there thou shouldest be also. Therefore thy special task on earth must be, to prepare thyself in thy mortal flesh—which is hereafter to put on immortality—and thy deathless spirit, for an eternal dwelling with the pure and awful GoD, in His Paradise of Light and Glory. This must thou do by co-operating with My Spirit, even the Holk Ghost, the Comforter, which, through thy sacramental union with Me, worketh in thee all righteousness.

Take thou heed, then, first of all, that thou attend most diligently upon the means of grace; be thou never absent from the sanctuary, when the ministrations of Mine earthly representatives call into action, Mine office as the Great High Priest, in all its power and efficacy. Be thou there alike when they offer up, at morn and eve, the incense of praise and supplication; and when, through Me, in beatific union, they draw nigh to their dear elder brethren in the faith, My holy martyrs and pure saints, who sleep in Me; and, most of all, in those bright hours, when it is given them to make the One Supreme Oblation, the sacrifice of Mine own Flesh and Blood. Let nought deter thee from My house of prayer, -no weariness, or pain, er storms of wintry skies; for My wrath is kindled against those who make the care of their poor mortal frame a reason for abstaining from the very source and food of everlasting life. O that My people would consider how far better it is to peril the body, than to starve the soul!

Again, be thou instant in that secret prayer in thine own closet, which thy FATHER shall openly reward; yea, be thou instant therein, though often thy frail flesh seem to be overburdened: remembering still the promise I made by My righteous servant's lips,-how that, in due season, thou shalt reap, if thou faint not. Nor think it is enough to pray, when thou art moved by thine own soul's desire or need; the full and reverent worship of thy GoD, in private as in public, is thy bounden duty, which in no case but of dire necessity, may be diminished or set aside. Not for thine own good only art thou bound to pray, but to show forth His glory, as doth all creation; and how couldst thou hourly cling to Me, from Whom thy soul by sin is ever falling, except by ceaseless communing with Me in prayer? See, then, that thou have stated times and seasons for this solemn act: settle it with thyself, or by the rule of some wiser guide, how often thou wilt knock at heaven's gate, that I may open to thee. See also that thou be as careful of all irreverence. in posture or in thought, as thou wouldest be when kneeling in My holy house, before the eyes

of men; according as it is written, "Before thou prayest, prepare thyself, and be not as one that tempteth the LORD."

Be not thou alone content, to prevent the morning watches, and to make the lifting up of thy hands be as an evening sacrifice. For I charge thee, by the nights I spent upon the cold and lonely mountain, labouring for thee in heartwrung supplication; let not one of the great hours of Mine agony go past, without renewing in spiritual communion the application of My tortures to the healing of thy soul. Nor do thou deem these rules for the interior life are futile, and avail not to the weightier matters of the law; thou hast fully learnt, that in thy union with Me, alone, is life present and eternal; and the more utterly thou art made like to Me in Suffering, the more deeply thou canst assimilate thyself to every act and thought, and sorrow of Mine earthly course, so the more closely shalt thou be knit to Me, and live in My very life. For this cause also I command thee to give all diligence, in keeping sacred the times and seasons which mark the great events of Mine existence among men; preparing thyself thereunto with solemn fast and watching; this wert thou bound to do as the Law of My Church alone, which with so gracious care points out the holiest way, for the performance of

that work of fasting, to which I have promised a recompense, great as the reward of prayer. But I do love to lure thee to Myself with patient tenderness: and when it injures not thy soul, to give a sweetness to obedience by telling thee the hidden blessing it unfolds.

Therefore do I show thee, why thou mayest not keep festival with Me or with My saints. till thou hast mortified thy flesh with abstinence, and chastened thy soul with deepest prayer. For lo, I Myself went not up to joy, but first I suffered pain; I entered not into My glory before I was crucified; therefore if thou wouldest be one with Me, seek not to joy in My glorious Resurrection till thou hast kept watch and fast with Me, throughout the dreary days wherein I hungered in the wilderness; and till thou hast counted one by one, with weeping eyes and suffering frame, the moments of My deepening agony; lay not down in softness and in peace thy guilty head, upon that night when I was stretched on stones and thorns, as on a rack, beneath the load of all earth's wickedness, nor let one faintest thought of ease uplift thy soul from lowest depths of penitential woe, upon My crowning day of Torture. So come not thou unto the Mount of Mine Ascension. till, by humbling of thy soul, and outward chastening thou hast joined thyself to Me, Who abstained

from entering upon My glory in the Heavens, after that I was risen, till I had laboured yet again to build My Church on earth. Nor triumph thou before the Manger of the Virgin-Born till thou hast entered on the Feast of My Nativity. by deep humiliation of thy soul and body, even as I Myself did come into the world. In like manner, when through the union of Mine own with Me. thou comest nigh to My departed saints, on their bright day of death and victory, meeting them, as it were, in My Bosom, when I visit thee in sacramental fulness, forget not thou how they were tortured, not accepting deliverance, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; and show thou by mortification of thyself how gladly thou wouldest share their sufferings, if thou mightest win their glory.

Child. Most Blessed Master, Thou dost make the path of Thy Commandments sweet indeed; this is to give joy in suffering. Oh yet more, yet deeper in my soul! teach me to labour for Thy sake.

Divine Master. Think not all will be joy or sweetness; full often shalt thou faint and cry out, "LORD, how long?" and often will thy flesh rebel against the spirit, but be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life. The severest part of all thy labour is that actual hourly strife with sin, of which thou must learn

more deeply from Me yet; but not now when thou wouldest only seek to understand aright the outward service I demand of thee.

Remember then what I did answer when that young man whom I loved as I love thee, My child, desired to know what he yet lacked, who had kept My Commandments from his youth upward. Said I not to him, "Go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor?" and so in like manner do I say to thee; this was the deep blessing I pronounced upon My chosen ones, to comfort them in the anguish of their souls at My departing. "Me ye have not," I said, "but the poor ye have with you always;" that in one of the least of these they might have power to minister to Me. And faithfully have I performed that promise; there is not a spot in the wide world, unblest by some poor struggling sufferer, who claims from My redeemed, the care and tenderness they would bestow on Me. There is thy work, My child, enough to occupy each moment of thy life -if even day and night thy feeble frame could labour without rest. For think not, that thou couldest fulfil, so much as the smallest part of My requirements in this respect, although thou gavest the whole sum of thy possessions on this earth, if yet thou gavest not with them, thyself, thy time, thine energies, thy toil; for know that they are

not only poor, who lack the necessities of life, nor rich, who possess the good things of this world. Thou knowest that there are treasures which moth and rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal, yea, riches unsearchable, whose depth no human thought can penetrate, even the riches of the glory of this mystery, CHRIST IN MAN, the hope of glory! and lo, how many millions there be, bereft of these, the only true possessions which can satisfy the deathless soul; whilst thou, on whom are lavished spiritual treasures, in vast abundance, makest no transfer of them to thy brethren, and then complainest that thy days pass by in idleness! Yet these thy heavenly riches, like the widow's cruse of oil, could never waste, however much thou mightest give forth of them; for though it were permitted thee, to supply the very world itself, thou couldst never diminish the store for thine own soul. Look round, then, on the whole world lying in wickedness, and linger no more, so falsely mourning thine inaction; set thy hand with hearty zeal unto the work, and go thou forth to labour in My vineyard, even till the going down of thine earthly sun.

Child. Alas, good Master, there is in truth a lack of labourers in Thy vineyard: they are few though the harvest is so plenteous; but what am I that I should presume to teach others, who

haply may be myself a castaway? I am not one of Thy Priests, commissioned and gifted by the Holy Ghost: if I myself scarcely be saved, because of weakness and great sin, how shall seek to rescue others?

Divine Master. My child, when the young man of whom I spake, went away from Me sorrowing because of My words, what was his sorrow unto Mine, Whom he abandoned? Beware lest thou follow in his steps, misled by a false humility, which is too often the cloke to indolence; know that the very lowest and humblest of My children may minister to Me in the person of My poor. For if thou hast but one mite, thou art rich to him who lacketh all things pertaining to this life; and in spiritual blessings, if thou hadst but once caught the whisper of My Name, Jesus, Who saveth His people from their sins, thou couldest bestow a deathless treasure upon him, who never hath so much as heard, if there be any SAVIOUR. Yea, even if thou wert so poor in this world's goods, and they so rich in heavenly things, that neither after this fashion couldest thou serve them; think not thou art exempt for this from ministering unto them; for still if nought else is left thee, thou canst go forth and give them Love! that which, above all other things, I claim from thee. Go to them in their sickness and affliction.

weep with them that weep, rejoice with them that do rejoice; thine be the voice of comfort in the hour of trial, of tenderness in their time of desolation; thine be the arm to pillow the weary head; wash thou the feet of the aged and infirm; to the bereaved be thou a child, and to the fatherless a parent, and to all, for My dear sake, a servant. Besides all this, said I ever unto thee that thou shouldest do thy work unguided? have I not set My Priests as overseers among you, that they should send every man to labour according to his vocation and capacity? I charge thee lift not thy hand, nor stir one step within My Fold, except by their counsel and command; go submit thyself unto them, and fear not thou, that they will find thee work enough, to fill this life until I come to call thee.

Child. Master, I bow me down in shame and confusion of face, to think I should have dared to doubt, that what Thou didst command would be made possible even unto me; it is enough, I go to seek Thee, where the desolate and poor, in soul and body, shall give me the unutterable joy of tending Thee.

Bitine Master. Go; but remember in this, as in the work within thy soul, I may not have a mocking service offered unto Me: hope not thou to join thine own ease and desires with the labour

in My vineyard; prepare thyself to endure, as did My saints of old, in pain and self-denial; be thou ready, night or day, when I shall call thee by the Voice of My afflicted; in cold and weariness, if need be; in sufferings and in faintings, toil thou on; sit not thou by blazing hearths, when I without am shivering in the blast; lay thee not down on couch of ease, when I am labouring through the hours of rest for scanty bread; take not thy pleasure in the summer woods, when I am on the bed of pain; and in all thy labour see that thou attend the first, unto the claims which I have set around thee in thy life, by ties of blood and of dependence: not until all the work is done which I have given thee to do in thine immediate sphere, mayest thou go forth to seek a wider range of usefulness; for great is thy charge, if even one of the little lambs of My pure fold be given thee to lead in paths of holiness; and it shall be, My beloved child, that when thou hast but made trial of My work, thy soul shall rather faint within thee at its greatness, than longer mourn to be unoccupied; but if it prove so, think in that hour on the day, when My Voice shall say to those, who gave to Me on earth their love and their compassion, Come, ye blessed of My FATHER!

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CHAPTER VI.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS IN PERSEVERANCE.

Divine Master. Why is thy soul so heavy, O My child, and wherefore is it so disquieted within thee? Dost thou droop already on the toilsome path, that leadeth to the Home of thine Eternal Love? Have I not had compassion on thee, as once upon the multitude who followed Me, like thee, into the Wilderness, and by a greater miracle than ever I wrought for them, provided thee with heavenly food, lest thou faint by the way? Behold, in the strength of that meat, thou mayest go even unto the Mount of GoD, and is it well that thou shouldest falter thus. - when on that far drearier road,-Mine awful way of Sorrows,-I hasted with such eager Feet, and would not be deterred, though every step from agony to agony still drove Me on unto the consummation of My Torture; which I longed for, as thou longest

THE DIVINE MASTER



VI . PERSEVERANCE .

I know thy sorrow see thy daily grief . I count thy sufferings and disend relief .

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now for rest,—that out of Mine infinity of Suffering, I might build up for thee an everlasting joy? My child, in all that bitter course, from My first sigh upon My Virgin Mother's Breast, unto the deepest and the last, I breathed expiring on the Murderous Wood, which for thy sake was unto Me a sweeter resting Place,-I never once laid down My Cross, as thou hast done this hour. Where were thy Hope, if ever I had yielded to the weakness of My human nature, when ofttimes spent with anguish? and wherefore then hast thou relaxed thy hold, and knelt thee down beside it there, as though no man cared for thy soul, and I, thy God and strength, had even forgotten thee? Knowest thou not, that in thy patience thou must possess thy soul, till the brief tyranny of life be overpast, and thou art called to rest for ever? a little while, and all that makes existence on this earth for thee, shall be as a dream, when one awaketh, merged in the first long loving look of thine adoring and amazed soul, when thou shalt behold Me as I am.

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees, for of heaviness cometh death, and the heaviness of the heart breaketh strength. Well is it for thee, that thou hast not left thy Cross when thou didst set it down, and hast resolved at least to kneel beside it, for it had not

failed, but thou hadst drifted far from Me, when no longer anchored by it at My Feet, except I had rend the voiceless supplication of thy soul, that called on Me, well-nigh unconsciously, in groanings which could not be uttered.

Chilv. Divinest Master, were it not that even my unclean lips refuse so to blaspheme Thine everlasting mercy, now should I say—it is in vain that Thou hast left the ninety and the nine fair sheep, all folded safely in Thy Blessed Pastures, to follow after me the one most lost and erring! for if all Thy tender care up to this hour, the rich abundance of Thy sacramental grace, and the priceless blessings of Thine Intercession, have been resisted by the deep corruption of my soul, yea, and backward turned by my stony heart, like gushing waters from a rock, what can Thy long-suffering avail me now, save to deepen my great condemnation?

Bivine Master. My child, if thy heart condemn thee, God is greater than thy heart, and knoweth all things. Behold My Spirit hath not ceased to strive with thee, neither have I condemned thee.

Ghilv. Yea, LORD, but Thou hast said to me, "Go and sin no more;" and I have gone and sinned again—not once nor twice, but in each hour and moment of my life! Oh, Master, who didst pray for Thy cruel enemies, with hands outstretched

in supplication, by the very nails wherewith they did themselves transfix them, I do not doubt Thy mercy! I believe that until seventy times seven Thou dost forgive: that whensoever the suppliant cometh unto Thee, laden even with the heaviest weight of sin, but with full purpose of amended life, straightway Thy pardoning Hands invisible are laid upon his head, and from his soul the dark stains pass, as clouds before the Rising Sun: for it is written that when the lener knelt to Thee, and said, "LORD, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean," IMMEDIATELY Thine answer came, with healing power, "I will; be thou clean." And it is this very load of mercy, leaving to my guilty soul no shadow of excuse, that I so dread may weigh me down, even to the deepest hell; for oh, my LORD, that solemn charge of Thine, which ever followeth on the reconciling words, "Go, and sin no more," that just requirement, and most pure command, doth haunt my very heart, and ringeth ever in mine ears, as the sentence of mine utter condemnation.

"Go, and sin no more." Alas! alas! and I believe the very last breath which these lips shall breathe, ere they are closed in death, will pass in some sin-tainted word; for never yet hath pardon come to me, like an angel of mercy and of peace, but I have met it with renewed guilt! Oh

what great troubles and adversities hast Thou shown me, in the way of the Holy Cross, and surely I have endured its discipline in vain! Sharp is that Cross,—mournful is that way, and what availeth me to walk in it, if I drag after me for ever this indestructible pollution, which cannot enter into Thy Pure Presence, but must surely cause me to be consumed, by the Brightness of Thy Coming?

Master, now will I show Thee how it hath been with me. When I first crouched beneath Thy Feet, allured by Thy Dear Love, and felt Thy Tender Hands most gently lay the Cross upon my heart, and heard Thy Voice so softly speak to me of that Sweet Home, where I should rest for ever in Thine Everlasting Arms,—it seemed to me as if I must have died, ere I had taken the accursed thing unto my heart again, and driven Thee out thence, whose dwelling Place my bosom had become in sacramental visitings. But alas! with the promise yet upon my lips, I felt some breath of sin renewed go stealing through my soul, and swift it rose up as a dark foul mist, obscuring the glory of Thy Presence there, whilst others followed hard upon its heels, and soon heaped up once more a burden that was insupportable. Then I betook me, to the sharp yet blessed discipline Thou didst command, and dragged up all that hateful mass into the light of day, before

the eyes of Thine anointed representative; and sweet, more sweet than ever voice of earthly love the pitying accents of forgiveness came, so like to those which Thou didst utter on the trembling woman,-" Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." But oh, my LORD, dear LORD of great compassion, scarce had the cleansing power passed with its healing balm and precious ointment through my fainting spirit, when some fresh taint came creeping in, and stained the new-washed garment of my soul again! nor hath it been once alone, but ever thus! How often I have vowed deep in my heart, that could I hear that voice of peace again, I never would revoke its sweet decree by my own swift-recurring sin; and yet when to my long. ing prayer that consolation hath anew been given, anew have I destroyed it, by my own dark failings. And so, in like manner, if I have dared approach Thine Altar, and received Thy very Self within my soul, Thyself, all Purity, all Power, all Love! how basely have I treated Thee, Thou Guest Divine? for ever taking Thee to tabernacle in my heart, amid the very vices, which have pierced Thine Own in sharpest wound! Oh when I have felt Thy Presence, in that Sacrament, when Thou hast been so very near to me, that almost I thought it was but a little dimness in mine eyes, that hid Thee from me, it hath seemed

as though I rather would have borne the fires of hell in innocence, if such a miracle could be, than defile the Habitation of the Virgin Born, the Pure Immaculate, within my breast, by even the faroff shade of aught impure. Thus have I thought, when lingering still beside that altar where Thou hast met me, and then, alas, Master, good Master, it hath but required a little step beyond the sanctuary, a little sound of human voices, a brief moment in the outer life, and the soul, that nestled so lovingly within Thine Arms, and clung to Thee, falls down into the earth again, and gathers up the very dust to soil itself withal! Ever thus as it hath been with these high privileges, so also with mine own poor vows and prayers, while I have sought to make them even as angel's wings, to bear me up to Thee, the sleepless sins, like grasping demons, failed not to drag me back upon the downward path.

Therefore it is my heart hath failed me utterly, and the hope that once enabled me to bear this heavy Cross hath faded quite away; so that I can no longer hold it up,—for the stern requirements of Thy righteous laws,—the daily crucifixion of the natural will, are all most sweet and welcome, if through their bitterness we may look on with longing trust into the painless rest of a Bright Eternity with Thee. But Thou knowest, LORD,

with what deep truth Thy blessed servant said of all who follow Thee in pain and weariness, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable;" and I, alas, beyond this mortal span misused, defiled, and lent perhaps in vain,—can only look to hear the terrible voice of most just judgment, bidding me depart from the presence of Thy Purity for ever. Since whilst I pass from taint to taint, from sin to penitence, and from penitence to sin again, I know that Thou continuest Holy, O Thou Worship of Israel, and the thought is like a keen bright sword, piercing my very soul.

Divine Master. Yet even by this Eternal Holiness it is that My long-suffering shall not fail, nor My mercy find a limit in thine often infirmities! Refrain now thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for there is hope in thine end, whereof thy very sorrow is a pledge; thinkest thou that ever thy feeble soul could thus have mourned for sin, except the HOLY SPIRIT had been with thee, uniting thee to Me, the Prince of Purity? Thou hast but proved the truth and wisdom of those words, "My son, if thou come to serve the LORD, prepare thy soul for temptation." So long as a man is content to walk in the error of his own ways, and seeketh not My Love, to be his one sole joy, he seemeth to have no let or hindrance in his evil course, for the Great Enemy is well pleased to

leave unto himself the work of his destruction, and the corrupt nature being given uninterrupted mastery, goeth smoothly down the broad and fatal way, without a fear or scarce a consciousness of its own guilt, from day to day; but it is far otherwise when the Grace of Baptism, all unresisted, hath worked so mightily upon the soul, that it hath been constrained to rise up and to follow Me. Then is there war within it from that hour, the Spirit against the flesh, and My faithful soldier must prepare for many a wound and many a woe, and a sleepless watch by day and night. For straightway the Devil standeth forth and crieth out, "Who is on my side, who?" and at his call each lurking passion in that soul, each evil temper and corrupt desire, come thronging from their secret haunts, to fight beneath his banner and assail My servant on his heavenward course; and ever as he struggleth with a stronger effort, they gather themselves up, and do more furiously rage together; the peculiar desires of his mind, the sins that easily beset him, the evil impulses that quickened most his natural heart, all these are leagued against him; yea, his very self doth seem to stand an armed man, prepared with desperate will to trample down his pure regenerate nature; and so, day by day, the warfare deepens, till oft My faithful children deem that

they are even spent, when the very triumph of their rest is close at hand; for in the midst of all these fierce assaults, their feet are ever on a rock that goes with them unseen, and that Spiritual Rock is I Myself the CHRIST.

Child. Beloved Master, it is very sweet to hear Thee say, that they are most assailed who love Thee most; in such a thought there is a very well of comfort, when the soul is torn and marred by the fiery darts of the Wicked One. Truly Thou dost not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; but alas, my LORD, I dare not take unto myself the peace Thy blessed words should give; for surely it is my own infirmity, yea my own sin, which has well-nigh extinguished in my cold heart the lingering sparks of that pure Fire of Love, the Unction from the Holy One, which was kindled in me with the flame of my regenerate life. Behold, I have not remained stedfast, as Thou didst command me; I have not kept my faith, and struggled on unflinching in Thy Sacred Steps, despite all obstacles from within and from without; but I have grown weary and faint in my mind, when I found myself recalled each day unto a deepening warfare, which through my weakness was always still a battle, and never a final victory; the ceaseless pressing of Thy Cross on every thought, and word, and deed, in small

things as in great, did seem at length a burden, heavier than I could bear, the more that I had so little of the sweet power of hope, to make it lighter; it seemed not too weighty for each separate moment as it passed; but the thought that none in all my life should be without its unrelenting load—that I must never cease to persecute myself, and endure such contradiction of my will, in all my natural longings and desires, became at last too bitter for my coward heart; since I dared not look unto the bright reward, whose promise had made all suffering and endurance sweet; and so it came to pass, good LORD, that I at last, a faithless child, have laid the burden down, and my poor trembling feet no more have gained a step upon that rough ascent; but I have knelt me here beside it: I have not turned unto the paths of earth again; for if thy Bright and Holy Home be out of reach for one so faltering and so weak, at least the soul that once hath panted for the sweetness of Thy Presence there, could never seek to feed again on this world's dust and ashes.

Bitte Master. Lingering and slow, replete unto the last dull second with torture, spiritual and bodily, such as thy human heart cannot conceive, the dragging hours of Mine awful Crucifixion passed for Me; each moment of each one seemed more, oh how far more! than My racked frame and

Spirit could endure; sharper and sharper thrilled My torn and shivering nerves; fainter and fainter on My wounded Breast, fell down My Thorn-pierced Head; louder and louder round Me grew the mocking taunts of those, for whom My Sinless Blood, impelled by tenderest Love, was gushing out through five deep ghastly rents; seven times My Lips were opened, from whence one brief word passing, had sent that lost, ungrateful world, which by their word was made, for ever reeling to destruction from before My Face; seven times they were unclosed, and I spake only to intercede, to pardon, to console, to pray, and to submit; but never to say, "It is too much;" that from My Cross I might come down, as My foes deriding bade Me, to leave the generations of the sons of men for evermore to perish in their sins. Patient, patient, to the end I did endure and meekly bowed My Head, nor yielded up the Ghost, till I had drained the Cup of My Dread FATHER's wrath, unto the very dregs. And now desiring for My children that this cruel torture should avail to their redemption, desiring it with all the power of that Love, which even then lit up the world in purest glory, while the very day fled from the awful aspect of My Face in death, I have but asked of them that they should take the likeness of My Passion into their lives, and endure the dying

pangs of sin, the sufferings of their evil nature crucified; until made conquerors through My Love, they echo back the words, solemn and glorious,—"IT IS FINISHED," wherein I told a world's redemption,—and gently fall asleep in Me. This only have I asked, in return for all Mine Agony of Love, that they should follow the example of My Patience, in order that they may share My Glory; and thou from this brief constancy hast turned, O faithless child, and sayest, "It is too hard for me!"

Child. But never more, my LORD, oh never more will I with such ingratitude repay the longsuffering of Thine all-enduring Tenderness! bear with me yet a little, Thou Who didst heal the wound of Malchus, when he came, with cruel heart, to bear Thee unto judgment and to death, though I so many times have fallen from Thee, and Thou as often, with unwearied care, hast stretched forth Thy Blessed Hand again, and drawn me back unto Thy Breast. O my LORD, the very mother had not known such Love unquenchable for her own first-born child, as Thou hast shown to me, in all my many wanderings; and therefore I dare yet once again to plead with Thee, that Thou wouldest pardon this my last abhorred defection; for Thou hast shown me all its hideousness; and I would that mine eyes were

a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, to think I ever could thus desert Thee in my cowardly sloth, and prepare to make so base return for the mercy that endured unto death. O Master of Divine Compassion, I dare not say I will not turn from Thee again, for the wreck of many a broken vow lies rotting in my soul; but it seemeth to me now, as though it were more easy far to give my body to be burned, than ever again to be unfaithful unto Thee, in even the faintest thought; yet once more then with Thine accustomed pity, Gentlest Lord, unfold to me the cause of this last hateful fall, that I may shun it as I would the deadliest poison.

Divine Master. Thou wilt do well, my child, and thou mayest see at once wherein thine error hath consisted; thou hast lacked the grace of PERSEVERANCE, without which all other virtues springing up in thy regenerate soul, are profitless as the unconnected links of some fair broken chain. This is the seal which must be set on all the holy gifts of faith, and love, and zeal, poured out upon thee in the waters of Baptism; else will they break from thy weak heart, and run to waste. It is the crowning grace of Mine elect, the patience of the saints, and therefore is it above all others hard to be attained; although not less within the reach of even the feeblest of My servants.

Now will I show thee how to labour for it. Dost thou remember, O My child, when thou wert newly set within the holy path of suffering and obedience, where My Bleeding Feet had gone before, and My Pierced Hands upheld a glorious Crown above thy head, how full thou wast of energy and pure devotion? how willing to assay the hardest tasks? how longing to lay down thy very life for Me, and do for My dear sake such noble deeds as did My blessed martyrs in the days of old. Now to this I called thee not, My child; but I commanded thee instead to bind thy soul in an entire captivity unto My will, which can make the calm and uneventful life, an offering greater and more difficult, than even a sudden death by fire or sword would be. I bid thee in every hour of every day, by heart, and hands, and lips, in little matters, as in great, unceasing immolate thy will unto My pleasure, and that through dryness oft, and seeming desolation, and the veiling of My Presence from thy longing heart; for so it is needful I should prove My own; if I were ever to pour out on them, the whole surpassing sweetness of My Love, they could not choose but cling to Me, with a rapture of content, wherein no trial of faith could be; and it is herein, My child, that lacking perseverance thou hast failed; thou hast grown weary of the

never-ceasing watch over each temper, feeling, word, and deed; the flame of thy first zeal soon burned away, when thou didst find thyself awaking morn after morn to a renewed servitude, in every shade and breath of thy soul's life. Thou who wert eager for the torture and the death, hast stumbled at the little self-denials perpetually recurring, the little acts of hourly and unseen submission, which seemed unto thyself an offering scarcely fit for Me; each one were easy, as a separate deed, but to find no single moment free from some slight crossing of thy will, hath seemed a trial too great for thy poor strength, oh thou who fearedst not to ask for martyrdom. And a martyr thou shalt be, but in My own chosen way; even in all the common duties of thy sphere, never neglected through weariness and gloom, but never winning human praise, as deeds of high devotion would,

Thou must practise the grace of perseverance according as I will that all should learn it; not, as in the first transports of a soul called out to follow Me, when a thousand beams of light celestial seem to shine upon the heavenward path, even ecstatic hope, and ardent zeal, a sense of purest love for Me, and loving sympathy from tender friends, who hail with joy a fellow-servant in the faith; but in obscurity and soberness, when all these have

seemed to die away, and thou art left unnoticed and uncheered alone before My Cross; with only a task inglorious as thou deemest, bound upon thee by My will-a task which is not the grasping of the spear that pierced My side, to mangle thine own heart with it, and bid the world behold thee bleeding for My sake, but which compels thee to take the thorns one by one from My sharp Crown, and fix them in thy flesh, and silently to nail each day some hidden sin the more, unto the unrevealing Wood. This is perseverance; never to rest from thine inward purification, day or night, yet never to know the glad excitement of some deed of daring love. Thy work is to slay thine evil nature, as thou knowest well; but remember there is no sudden death for sin; in lingering sickness, and long-drawn agony, it dieth, and thou must abide its slow expiring, patient as I Myself did watch the life-blood ebbing from My Heart

that there is a true and blessed martyrdom in that enduring constancy of calm obedience, which marketh every moment with the sharpness of Thy Cross. Oh grant me then this needful grace of perseverance, for lack of which, I have well-nigh perished from Thy Presence! Give me the Martyr's heart, that I may embody in my life the patient hours of Thy slow, torturing Crucifixion.

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THE DIVINE MASTER.



VII. PATIENCE.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS IN HOLY ZEAL.

did t cive it not that I by identified was

Bivine Master. Child of My deep Compassion, believest thou that I love thee?

Child. Yea, LORD, I know that Thou lovest me by Thy Life of Sorrow, and Thy Death of Pain.

Bivine Master. Believest thou that I would willingly afflict thee, and for Mine own pleasure stretch thy soul upon too sharp a Rack?

Chilv. Oh, Beloved Master, so to think were fearful blasphemy against Thine Everlasting Love! Surely I know too well Thou camest down from Thine all-glorious Home, unto this cruel and evil world, because the very thought of my least pang, in most deserved punishment, was so abhorrent to Thy Tender Mercy, that Thou wouldest do no less than pay each one I merited, with an infinity of suffering! How should I so misjudge Thee,

Blessed One? or doubt, that the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but that The kindness shall never depart from me, nor the covenant of Thy Peace be removed? for The art in very truth the LORD that hast mercy on me.

Divine Master. Who gave thee then that Cross, which I now find thee seeking to diminist, with such self-willed ardour?

Child. LORD, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that in Thy Love and in Thy Pity Thou Thyself didst give it me, that I by it might work out my salvation, and Thou in me mightest see the travail of Thy soul and be satisfied.

Divine Master. Was I then ignorant of its nature when I laid it on thee? Had I no know-ledge of its sharpness?

Child. Oh wherefore dost Thou try me thus? Alas, my LORD, and who so well as Thou shouldst know the uttermost extent of all its bitterness, when the very Hands with which Thou gave t it me, were so deep wounded by its power!

Divine Master. And thou knowing all this, and having yet further learned that I did lay on thee this Cross, with the sole intent of fitting thy weak soul, by its pure discipline for an eternal joy in Heaven, still hast not feared with thy rebellious hands, to tamper with the burden, Mine had shaped for thee, and seek to lessen its most

salutary weight. Child, knowest thou what thou art doing even now? thus striving to diminish on every side the bitter exactions of that complete self-sacrifice, which I demand, and from which, weak as thou art, thou wouldest tremble to be freed? Know, that how far so ever thou dost rob thyself of thine appointed discipline, by so much dost thou make thyself less fit to see My Face in Glory, less prepared to stand before Me at the Judgment Day, less ready to arise and meet Me when My fearful midnight Call shall come, thrilling through the quaking world—so awful that the living shall long to die, and the dead shall tremble to live again!

Child. O Lord, how dreadful are Thy words! my spirit faileth me for fear. Alas! have I dealt so madly with myself, as to frustrate, even in the least degree, Thy work of grace within my soul? truly I knew it not; for since that hour when Thou didst teach me how the glory of Thine Eternal Presence, can only be awarded unto a Constancy of Love, I would have died ere I had thrown aside Thy Cross for even a single day; though I confess that I have sought, when heart and flesh seemed fainting, at the long slow trial, to shun all aggravations of that constant labour, by which I struggled after Thee.

Bibine Master. My child, it hath befallen

were well assured, upon the rough and toilsome path of Life Eternal. I warned thee, that ever as thou dost overcome one obstacle, another will rise up before thee; and no sooner hath an upward step been gained, than one yet higher will appear above it, luring thee on, little by little, to such glorious heights of holiness, that thou wouldest deem them inaccessible, couldest thou behold them even now, and learn how there, as on the lofty mountains of the earth, the air is free from human taint, and the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, shine unimpeded upon purity, white as the drifting snow.

of thy heavenward course from thee, that thou be not dismayed, with the entire revelation of the painful and the slow degrees, by which that great work is accomplished, even the perfecting of My Saints in Me; and so to each fresh struggle with thine evil nature, to each new effort for a needful grace, thou comest with the hope that therein is the consummation of thy labour, whilst higher and higher, all unseen to thee, full many a steep ascent doth yet await thy wearied feet. Marvel not at this, and be not swallowed up with overmuch sorrow, to find that how painfully soever thou dost labour, there remaineth yet something

to be done, some nearer approach, some more ardent stretching out of thy whole soul to Me, till in the plenitude of My unveiled Love, which is thine everlasting joy, thou shalt pass on unto My very Bosom.

Marvel not, I say to thee, for the growth of the regenerate spirit, from the hour of its new birth into My Life, till it come unto a perfect man, even unto the measure of the stature of the fulness that is in Me, is in all things analogous to that slow developement of the human being, from infancy to full maturity, which is accomplished in the natural existence. Thou knowest how gradually the feeble limbs acquire strength, and how new faculties and powers, one by one, are wakened in the opening mind, and how by daily supplies of needful nourishment, and light, and air, this progress can alone be carried on And so it is with My redeemed; not once alone must they feed on the Bread which cometh down from Heaven, and behold the Light of My Guiding Spirit, and breathe the air of Mine actual Presence; but day by day, and hour by hour, feeding, strengthening, growing into My Likeness more and more, they must pass through a long and gradual process, ere they be so transformed unto Mine Image, that without annihilation, they could bear to see Me as I am in the Day of Mine Appearing.

Child. But so to see Thee, Blessed LORD, in Thy Perfect Glory, and Thy Perfect Love, what lengthened pain of slow and ever deepening labour could not the soul endure! O speak, and tell me where I next must plant my wearied feet, and how ascend a little nearer to Thy Holy Hill. and to Thy Dwelling; for I discern in Thy gentle Words, that for me the end is not yet, and the land of my Desire. And Thy Promise, is yet indeed a land, that is very far away. Yea, LORD, I feel it must be so; for if I so much as think upon that Hour when Thou shalt rend the heavens, and come down in the Glory of Thy Majesty, to shake terribly the earth, when Thou shalt rebuke the nations, and they shall rush like the rushing of many waters, and flee far off, and be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind,-I feel, to the very depths of my poor soul, that I am yet how far too weak and tainted to endure the Brightness of Thy Coming, till I have been purified and strengthened it may be seven times in the fire!

I felt not thus, good Master, even now, when Thou didst find me with coward hand, striving to lessen my dear Cross, and strip my needful duties of all the pain and bitterness, which I could wring from them by self-indulgence, and a cold fulfilment of their bare requirements; but Thou dost ever bring conviction of my great unlove, to this deceitful heart of mine, that seems indeed to burn with ardent longing after Thee, and yet in actions all unconsciously betrays Thee; —Thou dost show me to myself in Thy calm Words as in a mirror; and ever when Thou dost so, from the hateful Image straightway I do seek to flee, and hide me in Thy Likeness, by any means, however hard, which Thou wilt graciously employ for this most longed-for transformation.

And now I bless Thee, O watchful Shepherd of my soul, Who hast come to stay my wilful hands in their base work, ere I had time yet more to lessen that poor offering of my bounden duty, so mean and vile already. O gird me anew with strength, that I no more may seek to ease my shoulder from this sacred burden. Teach me once again, as Thou hast ever done, the secret of my failing courage. Uplift me in Thy Bleeding Hands, my LORD, for except Thy Love be written there in Blood, how could I dare to claim their mighty Help, after such great and oft-repeated failures? O set me up on the Rock that is higher than I, and show me where upon the rough ascent I now must turn my faltering steps.

Mivine Master. Stretch forth thy hands, and I will guide thee: stretch them forth in prayer for Light and Truth, and both will ever come to thee. Light, to shine upon each step which

thou must take from day to day, and Truth, t pierce into the depths of thy weak soul, and show thee all the hidden self-deceit, which to the very last, will seek to blight and spoil that one unfailing worship, that sacrifice of righteousnes which with thy whole life thou must offer unto M And now this is the subtle cause from which thy present faithlessness hath risen: in learnin perseverance thou hast unlearned zeal. Yet both are altogether needful, if thou wouldest be Mine indeed; and the one without the other can avail thee nought:-for I have fully shown the how, by constancy alone, thou canst be faithful even unto death, and so receive the Crown of Life. but constancy without zeal, My poor weak child is only to persevere in a lukewarm, stinted service. which is an offering most unmeet for Me, thy Victim, and thy Sacrifice, thy GoD and Judge! Zeal is but another name for Love, for that pure ardour of the adoring soul, which longs in every hour and action of the life to serve, and praise, and draw more near to Me, yea, which causeth it even to faint, and to consume away, for the very fervent desire that it hath to spend and to be spent for My dear Sake. My child, thou knowest that this is what I asked of thee when I said. "Give Me thy heart." Sacrifice and burntofferings I sought not from thee: but thy Love

have I desired—thy Love, zealous and earnest, burning with intense devotion, that will not be hidden nor restrained, but striveth ceaselessly, with every faculty and power, to devise some means of manifesting itself to Me, in living works and self-denials.

And how hath it been with thee in actual truth. My child? Thou hast persevered as I bade thee. and for this I do commend thee; but thou knowest that thou hast sought, to do only so much as was thy bounden duty, and no more. Painful and hard My just requirements seemed to thee; and rightly hast thou borne them day by day, nor soughtest to escape; but thou hast done so, weighing out, as it were, the scantiest measure of them, which thou couldest venture to perform, when thou knewest how the gates of hell are gaping open wide for those, who keep not My commandments; and hast thou ever borne a voluntary pang for Me? hast thou welcomed pain, and weariness, and woe, for My Name's Sake, yea, and sought for them as for a hidden treasure, if by any means it might be given thee, to serve Me in thy generation?hast thou at but the thought of My Deep Love and Purity, been fired with such gratitude and longing, that thou hast not so much as suffered thine eyes to sleep, nor thine eyelids to slumber, nor the temples of thy head to take any rest,

till by ardent discipline and cleansing, thou has st made the temple of thy soul a place for I e, an habitation for the mighty GoD of Jaco ? Hast thou looked round upon this world lying still in wickedness, though My deep expiring Sigh was breathed out over it, to infuse new life and hope, and righteousness within the dead c crupting mass, as in like manner from My Brea h the Spirit passed into the first man's soulless cla? and hast thou longed, with vehement desire, to give, if need be, thy whole life's energy to labour in that vineyard I watered with My Blood, and constrain it to yield up some little fruit to Ma; yea, hast thou so pined and yearned to devote thy whole self, who art all Mine, unto My work, that thou wouldest rather spend thyself in toil, which could not profit, if none better were provided, is do nought for Me on earth? This is true ze al -and where hath been thine, My child?

Child. Alas, Good Lond!

Bivine Master. Thou weepest? but take held that thy sorrow be after a godly sort—dare not to rest contented, with mourning thy great weakness and thy sin, and with only a dim desiring to be more like to those, who loved Me unto Death and Torture; for many there be who grieve My Horx Spirit with such profitless bewailings—making their idle moan for that which they have power to

remedy, without a thought, that in so doing they are uttering the very sentence of their own deep condemnation-for if they know their faithlessness, and long to serve Me, with a Living Love, for ever bearing fruit in noble deeds of high devotion, what hindereth them to rise up, and to be as very saints? The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." God in Heaven, and the Church on earth, are on their side, waiting to be gracious, and to lead them with a mighty Hand, and with a stretched out Arm, to the loftiest height of holiness and zeal, -yea even to Perfection,-but they are satisfied with expending all their grief in hollow lamentations, not stirring hand or foot to overcome their failing nature, and be strong in Me, as the very feeblest on this earth may be, if they have but a resolute purpose, and a hearty will. Nay verily, I say to thee, they take a very pleasure, subtle and unconscious, in telling those whose sympathy they seek, how deeply they bewail their feebleness and guilt; for in the very words wherewith they mourn their little love for Me, their deep deceitful heart would rather hope to prove its greatness! Out of their own mouth will I judge them; be not thou like to them: take heed that thou fall not into a snare so common—has thine own heart judged thee as lacking zeal and love unto this hour? Weep then! but weep not only: be up

and doing, with a burning heart that crieth out for some vast aliment whereon to feed its love, and hands that ever crave the weariness of endless toil.

O child, if thy dim eyes could pierce that blue unfathomable air which I have for ever ranctified by My descending blessing, as I passed through it on the day of Triumph, when the gates of Heaven lifted up their heads, that I the King of Glory might come in, and couldest thou look for one brief moment upon the wondrous he chts of unimagined bliss, to which My own redee ned may rise, through all the various grades of depening joy and glory, how would the matchless revelation steep thy very spirit, as it were, in a fire of intensest ardour, that would consume thee even to agony, if thou didst not seek to quench it in such an active pure devotion, as rests not day or night, from seeking ever some new means whereby to serve and honour Me! But hou mayest not seek the stimulus of such a glo fous sight, nor make it an excuse unto thyself that it is hidden from thee; for thou hast the Prophets and Apostles, and if thou hear them not, neither would it rouse thee, if I bid thee gaze into the very. Heaven of Heavens, like to him, My well-beloved, who wrote for thee at My command, the v sion of the things which shall be hereafter. When the

Chilv. O LORD, I would not dare so much as to attempt a palliation of my lukewarm faithlessness, because no revelation hath been made into my mortal eyes, of that pure land of everlasting loveliness, whose Light and Sun Thou shalt for ever be; for I feel it were enough for my deep condemnation, that I have known how truly even now, all Thy Baptized are come through the Blood of Sprinkling and the New Covenant, of which Thou art the Mediator, unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, yea and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven; to Thee the Judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect: if this should fail, ere my short time of trial be past, to fire my soul with holiest zeal. Thou savest truly it would not avail me to behold, even the Radiant Glory of Thy Promised Home. Yet tell me, O Divinest Master, if I gathered rightly from Thy Words even now, a hope which hath most strangely stirred my soul with longing and with strength renewed; saidst Thou that there are many grades of Bliss in that Delightsome Land, and that they who serve Thee with the greatest fervour here, shall rest most closely by Thy side for ever?

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threshold, of that sinless Dwelling! Yea, I sty unto thee, forasmuch as thou thyself dost crucity Me afresh, by all thy many sins, thou shouldest scarcely dare to ask for aught, save only to escape hell-fire. Thine evil deeds do pierce My Hands anew; thy wandering steps do rend My Bleeding Feet; thine every sinful thought doth open wider yet the gaping wound of My pure Heart; and dost thou not fear to think, thy zeal should still require to be fed with hopes, that thou mightest find a place upon My Right Hand or My Left? Shouldest thou not do all, which thy whole soul and life, and uttermost energy, may accomplish, only to win thyself an entrance there?

But I will have compassion on thee, and quicked now thy fainting soul and lagging steps, by showing thee somewhat of the richness, of that exceeding Great Reward, which I have prepared for those who love Me most. Thou knowest that the immortal soul of man, the Breath of God, which came from Him, can find no rest nor joy, yea, nought but suffering and desolation, until to Him it doth return. The one sole bliss for which it was created, and which alone can satisfy it, is o be with Him, and to know Him in His perfect Beauty; but as He is altogether Holy, the very Fount and Boundlessness of Purity, so by holiness alone, can the soul be made capable, in some

degree, of comprehending Him, and of finding even in that dim Comprehension an everlasting Blessedness-and therefore of necessity the measure of glory and of happiness which it hath power to enjoy with GoD eternally, must be in exact proportion to the amount of purity unto which it hath attained on earth; and thus while each one of My redeemed, to whom it is My FATHER'S good pleasure to give the Kingdom, shall there enjoy the utmost extent of bliss, which they are capable of receiving in their union with the Godhead, and shall believe none greater to exist in even the most exalted ranks of Seraphim,-yet they who in their mortal life have, by a more ardent discipline of purification and a closer walk with Me, been made in a higher degree partakers of the Divine Nature, shall by that holy elevation have a far deeper appreciation of the Rapture of My Presence, and be enabled to steep themselves more utterly in the inexhaustible ocean of delight, which it affords.

Understandest thou this? It hath its parallel, in the enjoyment which a child and a man in full maturity may know, each to the utmost of their capacity; yet differing in kind and in degree; for the highest felicity My little ones are capable of feeling, could never satisfy him who hath put away childish things; nor yet could they enter into the

exalted nature of the bliss, which he in the ripeness of his powers could know.

By reason, therefore, of the Blessed Truth which I have now unfolded unto thee, My chosen must be very zealous in this world, to knit themselves to Me in such a close and perfect union, as shall satisfy the cravings of their Love to all eter ity.

Child. O LORD, and unto me give grace to come so near Thee now in pure devotion that I may dwell within Thy Very Bosom there for ever! Good Master, I do clearly understand Thy words; I see it is a fatal error to suppose that our Soul and Spirit undergo a sudden transformation at the hour of death; rather the stripping off of the mortal flesh doth but lay bare their real state, and shows how far they are fitted to be glorified in Thee. And now although Thou saidest truly, that for me it were enough to hope I might escape the punishment of hell, yet, LORD, Thy reasonings have inflamed my soul with passionate cesire, so to struggle nearer and nearer to Thee in this Life, that I may know Thee hereafter ev n as THOU ART! And this will I strive to do, so help me Thy Pure Spirit! established the collection and had and in deal

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THE DIVINE MASTER.



VIII. LIVING FAITH.

In overy trouble dook unto the end.

And take the brots to be they constant friend.

London, J. Masters, Alders gate & New Bond St.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS IN TEMPTATION.

Child. Save me, O God, for the waters are come in, even unto my soul. I stick fast in the mire, where no ground is; I am come into deep waters, so that the floods run over me. Behold, all is desolation within me,—trouble, and terror, and dimness of anguish,—and I shall be driven to darkness; for I am torn, as it were, from the stronghold of my hopes, and cast out to

* The temptation specially referred to in this chapter is one peculiar only to minds of a certain stamp, and may therefore not be found applicable to the generality of readers; but it is a trial, at the same time, by no means uncommon, and in the instances where it does occur, it produces not only the most extreme suffering, but also a fatal tendency to despair. This is more particularly the case with young people, and those who are of an ardent and zealous disposition, and for this reason it has been thought very desirable to embody in the following pages, the substance of many wise counsels

perish in a very wilderness of gloom, where Thou art not, and where I have not even power to seek Thee. Woe is me! I am undone—undone; for it seems a very mockery to call on Thee, when faith is dead within my soul. Alas! how sweet and easy seem unto me now, the tribulations I repined at in my days of blessed hope; for then, however manifold my weaknesses and sins, I saw Thee still above my path, the Bright and Morning Star, leading me up unto eternal day. And now behold the light is darkened in the very heaven where I thought to find Thee, and I see nought, in all this dark bewilderment, but hell with ready fires desiring my lost soul, and death preparing soon to lead me into it.

Bivine Master. Peace, be still; be still, and know that I am God. Wherefore art thou so terrified and sore dismayed? If I am for thee,

which have been given to persons thus afflicted, by some of the most experienced guides of souls in our own day. It is hoped that, while this chapter may happily meet the case of some who stand sorely in need of comfort, it may also convey a profitable lesson to others, who have been mercifully spared so painful a visitation, by teaching them the necessity of an abiding faith and constancy through every species of temptation. But if any, again, should feel a nervous dread of becoming acquainted with difficulties which they have not hitherto encountered, they can avoid the perusal of it.

who shall be against thee? Am I not He that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth? I know thy works, and behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast kept My Word, and hast not denied My Name. I am thy light and thy salvation; whom then shalt thou fear? I am the strength of thy life; of whom then shalt thou be afraid? Faint not, therefore, but hold fast thy confidence unto the end; tell Me what means this sudden agony; pour out thy heart before Me; open to Me all thy serrow, and doubt not that I will give to thee the blessing of peace.

but weigh me deeper down into the abyss of condemnation! If it were to an open enemy that I had done this dishonour,—if aught save my faith in Thee had failed me, I could have borne it; but it was even Thou, mine own adored Master, my crucified and loving LORD,—with Whom I had taken sweet counsel, and walking in Thy holy house as Thine own friend,—Whom I have thus blasphemed with horrible doubts of Thine allperfect truth. Alas! my very words, even as I utter them, sound hateful to mine ears! But now must I tell Thee how this scourge hath come upon me, or my desolate soul will altogether faint beneath its pent-up anguish. I must speak to Thee, although even at this hour I discern Thee not, good Master, and Thy voice to my bewildered spirit is as the voice of one that speaketh in an unreal dream.

O, my LORD, Thou knowest how, along the weary way, step by step I have come after Thee, and how Thou hast led me Thyself, by Thy loving Spirit, through the land of righteousness, holding me by the right hand, and guiding me with Thy counsel, till I verily believed Thou wouldest hereafter receive me with glory; and Thou knowest how, allured by Thy gracious, teaching, I have gone as it were from strength to strength, adding to my repentance humility, and to humility perseverance, and to perseverance zeal, till it seemed to me, as the times of refreshing at Thy holy altar grew more and more divinely blessed, that I had entered even into Thy very heart, through the way opened for me by the deep wound in Thy side. And O, in that Pure Heart, the Centre and Focus of Eternal Love, the Holy Shrine of Perfect Charity which never faileth, what sweetness of ineffable repose was mine! How did I rest there in peace which passeth understanding! But lo, suddenly, in the very fulness of my joy, when most my soul was full of hope that I, who for Thy sake had made it hard unto myself to live, should find it sweet to die, there came to me, like sharp

arrows shot into my brain, distracting doubts of the very foundation of the faith itself! Blasphemous thoughts rose up in me against Thee, which I abhorred with an exceeding abhorrence, and yet they seemed, as it were, a part of mine own mind. Dark surmises haunted me, and distracting reasonings tore my spirit from its rest and hope, and cast me out, helpless and sinking, into that awful ocean of eternity, where all must be engulfed and perish, except they cling unto Thy Cross, as a drowning man unto the floating wood, and so, upborne by it, drift safely to the everlasting shores.

I cannot tell Thee, LORD, through what a racking chaos of perplexity and doubt, my wretched soul hath passed since then; doubt, ever intermingled with intensest love for Thee, till now, when my heart acknowledgeth and desireth no other LORD save Thee, I am yet, as it were, possessed with an evil spirit of unbelief! O, said I not well, I am most utterly undone? for without faith it is impossible to please GoD.

Wouldst not desire to please Him! but now hast thou, in actual fact, a loving and a true belief, which the malicious enemy hath clouded over for a little season, to the great discomfort of thy soul. Yet fear not thou, My child, for he hath assailed

thee with this cruel violence, having great wrath, because he knoweth that his time is short; he knoweth that yet a little while, and thy sore conflict shall be over, and thou shalt gently fall asleep in Me, thy bitter struggle merged in perfect rest. Therefore this is his hour, the hour of his temptation; for when he hath offered sin unto thy soul, he hath no more that he can do. He cannot force thee to blacken thy baptismal robe with the least shadow of defilement, except of thine own free will; and now because, through sacramental grace, thou hast been enabled to resist him when he sought to tempt thee, by the lusts of the flesh, or the vain glories of the world, he hath devised this last and cruel assault, -wherewith, if it were possible, to deceive even thee, Mine own elect, and cause thee, by his vile suggestions, to make shipwreck of the faith; that so, having lost the hope which was thy very life, thou mightest, in thine uttermost despair, curse God, and die.

Yea, even as it befel My righteous servant Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: wherefore be strong, O child, greatly beloved; yea, I say unto thee, be strong. There hath no temptation taken thee but such as is common unto men; and it shall be, that if thou wilt hold fast thine integrity, and thy

confidence in Me, firm unto the end, thou shalt be blessed in this latter trial far more than in the beginning; and the peace which thou hast lost shall return to thee with an abundance and a sweetness of eternal rest, greatly indeed beyond all that thou hast looked for;—in like manner as I restored unto My faithful Job, twofold more than he had before, of all that was taken away from him, when I permitted that wicked one to try him in manifold afflictions.

Child. O LORD of divinest mercy, God of all consolation, as Thou speakest so gently unto me, I feel how speedily my bitter mourning were turned into serenest joy, if I could but discern therein Thy sacred Cross; even as the waters of Marah were changed to sweetness, by the casting in of that blessed tree, which typified the holier wood. But I dare not take this all-sufficient comfort to myself; I dare not think this blasphemy is not mine own abhorrent crime. It seems as though it were my very soul which riseth up, with cold and subtle reasonings, to disprove Thy truth. I struggle with convulsive efforts, still to cling to some poor fragments of that glorious body of sound doctrine, where I once found life and hope eternal. But whilst I strive thus to persuade myself that I believe. I feel as if I mocked myself, knowing full well, in dark reality, that all the while faith is

extinguished in my soul, as a light that hath gone out, and that dull and steady unbelief seemeth to pervade every thought and impulse of my being. Surely, then, if even it be so, that it is Satan who hath sown these baneful seeds in my poor, wretched soul, yet on me no less the guilt of their wicked fruits remaineth. From whencesoever this great disbelief hath sprung, is it not enough that in my heart I have denied Thee, and doubted every marvellous detail of Thy most glorious redemption, to seal me as a thing accursed from Thee? Could any be so paralyzed with unbelief, and yet be innocent? O, gracious Master, in the awful watches of the night, and through the day, whose light for me is turned to darkness, how do these words of Thine, glare on my fainting spirit, as though writ in living fire,-" He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." Alas! is not this my condemnation? for what matter whence this blasphemy of doubt hath come, if now it is incorporate with me, so that it is my very self that cannot own Thee ?- As a reference of the state of the

Bivine Master. And what to thee were those dread words which cause thine anguish, if thou didst not in actual fact, albeit unawares, believe in Me Who spake them? My child, I also will ask thee one thing: thou wouldest know if this

thy dark temptation is a sin. Tell Me, then, hast thou ever encouraged these unbelieving thoughts, and cherished them, and been right willing to escape, by them, from the stern requirements of My righteous faith?

Child. Encourage them! O LORD, as fitly mightest Thou ask the victim on the rack if he had sought to cling to it, and loved its tortures, and desired to stretch his shattered frame more agonisingly upon it! No rack that ever tore the body limb by limb, could cause such deep extremity of anguish, as this bitter unbelief hath wrought upon my soul, tearing from me hope by hope, and joy by joy, the whole of that ineffable delight, that peace eternal, that undying life and light, that sweetest consummation of my sole desire, which I have found in Thy dear love, Present and Everlasting. My God, words fail me to express the sorrowful denial, which every power and feeling of my stricken soul, doth give to such a question, or describe the utter loathing which I feel to these cruel doubts, that have changed me to a very Judas, who once thought to follow Thee so loving and faithful unto death.

Bivine Master. Then verily I say to thee, My child, that thou in this matter art altogether free from sin. These blasphemous thoughts are not thine own, and thou hast no more part in them

than thou wouldest have in wicked words which some insidious enemy might whisper in thine ear. It is permitted unto Satan to tempt My people, that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at My appearing; and he, in his malignant subtlety, faileth not to devise for them exceeding sore temptations, moulded according to what he knoweth of their dispositions and their growth in grace. But in all this they have no sin, if they do not consent to these unhallowed wiles, nor let them unresisted gain possession of their hearts. Except they do, by this means, make the guilt their own,—they are not more polluted by these defilements, which the devil casts into their souls, than one in spotless robes would be, if dust were flung at him, which speedily he would shake off, and remain unsoiled as before.

My child, thou mayest not doubt one single instant, that temptation in itself, can bring no guilt unto the soul, when thou knowest that I, thy Lord Immaculate, was tempted in all points like as thou art, yet without sin. O thou afflicted, tossed with the tempest, and not comforted, remember that tremendous and mysterious hour when I, Who hold the keys of death and hell, was

led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil forty days. Remember that, as I stood upon the mountain where the tempter carried Me, the eternal destinies of all mankind were trembling in the balance; for if, in that awful moment, I had vielded, by so much only as the faintest rising of a wish, to his abhorred suggestions,-if the least shadow of defilement had passed into My perfect soul with them, there had never been redemption for the race of men; and every generation that hath ever lived on earth had been gathered to destruction, as the whirlwind sweeps away the chaff, and it is no more seen! They had been brought down to the pit, to the house of everlasting desolation; they had lain in the hell like sheep, and death had gnawed upon them to all eternity. But now, because I came out of that furnace of temptation, seven times heated, pure and scatheless as I entered in, having preserved in perfect sinlessness, the Body of that flesh in which My people are reconciled to their FATHER, it remaineth therefore that I have power, not only to succour those who are tempted, but that I am able also to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Me, for I, Who ever live to make that intercession for them, am holy, harmless, and undefiled. What I will be suite to surgery

Thus thou seest, by the very nature of the

great salvation offered unto man, that there can be no sin in the worst temptation, if the spirit hath not yielded to it, by even the slightest dawning of consent. And furthermore, there is a deep and blessed mystery, for all My suffering members, in this fact, that as I Myself suffered being tempted, in order, that I might be able to help them in their hour of need, so will they now find a parallel to every species of temptation, in the different stages of Mine own great conflict. By every avenue, through which a reasonable soul and human flesh, can be approached of Satan, was I assailed that hour, and was in all triumphant. And herein thou findest once agair that fundamental principle of man's redemption. that forasmuch as My people could only be rescued from eternal death by living in My life, partakers of My divine nature, so was it needful, for the accomplishment of this deep union, that I shoul first live their life on earth, taking part in the flesh and blood, and so preventing them in a l their trials and temptations, that they might follow after Me in likeness of My sufferings.

Look well into the record of Mine awful combat with the Prince of Darkness, and thou shat find the likeness of thine own deep trial in that accursed effort of the Devil's, when he tempted Me, as Man, to disown My God, by falling down

to worship him. So would he labour now to cause thee by his cruel insinuations, even to deny thy Master-or rather to imagine that thou hadst denied Me, for I tell thee of a truth thou dost believe in Me, nor ever hast forsaken Me in actual fact, by even a single thought,—only thou hast heard the whisperings of the fiend, and fancied that thine own soul spake them. Of thy real faith existent, though silent, in thy sad bewilderment, there is a certain proof for thee, in thy great suffering; for how couldest thou mourn My loss, or writhe in anguish with the dread of utter separation from Me, if thou didst not indeed believe in Me and love Me, in the secret of thy spirit, with all thy power and strength? Take courage, therefore, and fear not; be thou stedfast' and immoveable, always abounding in My work, and let the blasphemies of Satan be to thee like raving winds, that vainly beat against the House, whose foundations are built upon the Rock.

Child. Oh, Beloved Master, even my trembling soul no longer can resist the truth of Thy dear words of comfort: hope, and peace, are dawning on me once again, despite mine undiminished trial; for I can now believe, that like to him of old whom Thou didst rescue, I am grievously tormented with a devil, who causeth me to utter blasphemies, and ofttimes casteth me into the fire

of tribulation, and the deep waters of despair. I know that Thou hast power to cast him out, when it shall be Thy good pleasure to bid him trouble me no more. But oh, my LORD, how shall I live until the hour of my deliverance? for although the momentary calm which Thou hast wrought hath lulled mine anguish into rest a little spare, vet do I know too well when Thou shalt have gone up from communing with me, the horri le delusions will rush back upon me with a sev nfold power, and surely they will utterly disa le me from following after Thee. Shall I not ever be like unto the helpless cripple who lay at the Gate of the Temple, which is called Beautiful, and I ad not strength to enter in and worship? for every power of the spiritual life seems paralyzed within me. How can I pray to Thee, my LORD, or vall on Thee for mercy, when my soul appeareth unto myself to deny Thy Very Being? how cal I follow all good works, or strive through sa ramental union with Thee to grow in Like less of Thy Perfect Nature, when I cannot so much as realize the Truth of Thine Existence?

In whatsoever shape these awful temptations come to me, they appear alike to act as a spiritual palsy; for even when they assume not the form of actual unbelief, they seem equally to deaden every effort and aspiration after Thee; at times they take the hideous shape of blasphemy against Thee, even when my faith in Thee is altogether clear; and this is agony, my LORD, to love Thee and blaspheme! Again, they oft will creep into my soul, as thoughts unholy and impure, when most I would keep every shadow of defilement from me, because of Thine awful nearness in the Holy Eucharist; or else, fastening upon those awful words of Thine which spake of sin that hath no pardon, they madden me with whisperings against the Holy One the Comforter, the Spirit of Purity and Love! but it matters not what guise they wear, for all seem alike to drive me from the presence of Thy Majesty Divine.

Divine Master. And all are alike abhorrent unto thee! herein be thy comfort, as I said. But thou dost well to seek the practical solution of thy difficulty, and to ask by what means thou canst live as My true and faithful servant, whilst enduring still such contradiction of the Evil One. And now the rule I give to thee is plain and obvious, and it applies to every species of temptation, of whatsoever nature or degree. Thou shalt resist the devil, and he shall flee from thee, and thus shall it be done. Do thou live in the midst of these temptations, as though thou wert unconscious of them. Continue thou to do My Will, whatever delusion may have gained possession of

thee, through the wiles of Satan; thou knowest full well what is thy bounden duty, as a baptized member of the Church, which is My Body; and do thou in all things struggle only to perform it, though Light and Hope, and every anchor of thy soul seem torn away from thee, and the horror of a great darkness be upon thee. When the devil constraineth thee as thou deemest to disbelieve in Me, then do thou act as though thou hadst a perfect faith, even a faith zealous, active, all-enduring unto death; do thou ever pray, continuing instant therein, even when it seems to thee that there is none to hear or answer; and give, as I have a ways bidden thee, thy whole energies and thoughts, and very life, to labour for thine attainment unto the Resurrection of the Just, even when the mocking fiend would bid thee altogether doubt of life beyond the grave; yea, though he seem to thee to cast eternal blackness over all the promises of immortality, and leave thee nought wherein to hope but an existence in this present world, still do thou turn unflinching from the joys of earth, and live a martyr's life, when thou hast no power so much as to believe that there can ever be a Martyr's Crown.

Remember that I, foreknowing every trial which should befall My children, have already said, "That if any man shall do the will of Him that sent Me, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of GoD;"

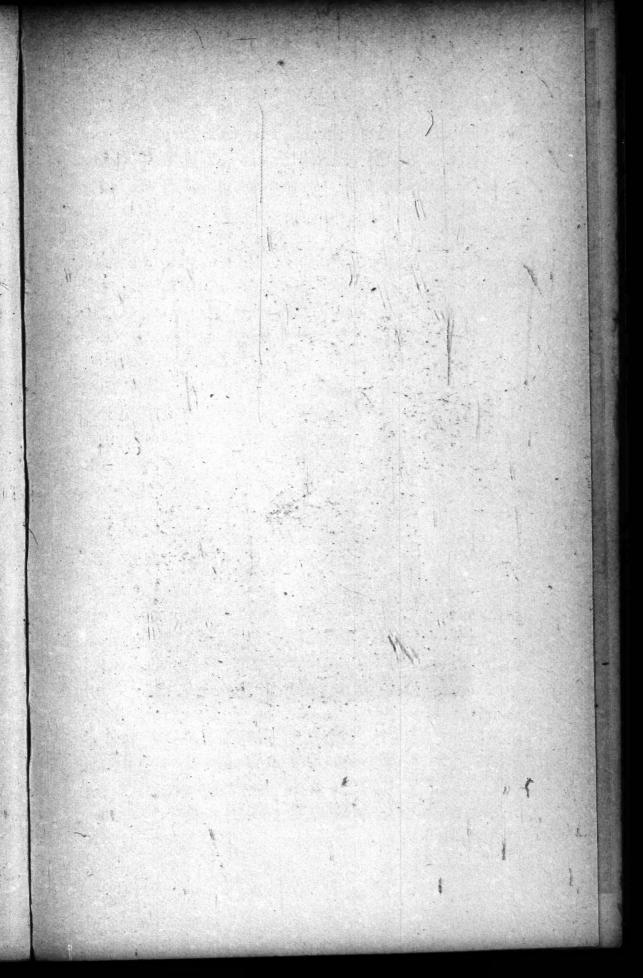
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and be thou very sure, that it is more blessed an hundred-fold, to continue My faithful servant, when all light and hope are clouded, and seem to be extinct, than when the Bright Rays of the Sun of Righteousness make pale the radiance of this world's allurements. In this manner do thou act, whatever be the form of thy temptations; when blasphemies and thoughts impure, to which thou givest no consent, creep into thine unwilling soul; shut thou thine ears to them, making as though thou heardest not, and go, straightway seek some action hard and painful, which thou mayest do for Me, and prove unto thyself that thou dost love Me truly, in spite of all. So when the father of lies would persuade thee thou hast sinned beyond redemption, do thou, having used all means appointed for penitence and absolution, go on and toil, as though thou hadst the certain promise of reward in Heaven, whilst truly thou dost think thyself condemned to hell. Say thou ever with a constancy unmoved, "Though He slay me, yet will I serve and trust in Him." And who that trusteth in Me shall ever be confounded?

Child. O, Master, most Benign, I thank Thee from the depth of my poor soul, that in Thine unfailing Pity, Thou dost teach me how I still may hold me fast by Thee, even when I discern Thee not, in all the dreary darkness; yet now this one thing more would I demand of Thy deep mercy!

The sorest agony in all my trial is the terror, never quitting me by night or day, that I shall perish through this deep temptation from before. Thy Face for ever; and although I am utterly purposed to follow Thy wise counsel, and live, whatever be mine inward state, as Thy believing, hoping servant all my days, yet it seemeth awful to me, to think that I may be tormented by this bitter dread unto the last; this then only we ald I say—How long, O LORD, Holy and Pure, stall I endure the persecution of this fear? Oh must the shadow of this great Despair pursue me even unto Death, as ofttimes I forebode with anglish?

Bivine Master. My child, thy FATHER hath given unto thy hands the cup of trembling, and if He will that thou should drink it to the dregs, ask not thou that it should pass from thee. I say not that it will be so, only I bid thee leave the times and seasons of thy trial to His Almighty Love; prepare, if need be, to endure this cross with patience, even unto death; and that thou mayest have deeper courage so to do, remember Thisthat he of all My blessed saints who was the first to win the martyr's crown, DIED KNEELING; and in like manner be thou all content to die, if such be My good pleasure, praying without hope; and lo, it may be in that hour, that looking up into eternity, thine opening eyes shall see the Gory of God, and I, Jesus, standing at His Right Hand.



THE DIVINE MASTER.



IX. SURE HOPE.

Blatsed is he who Lifes long Hill doth climb. Raising his every hope to Life divine.

London J. Masters Aldersquare New Bond St.



CHAPTER IX.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS IN SUFFERING.

Bibine Master. Arise! put on strength, O child of My Love! gird thyself anew to the battle, for behold the night is far spent, the day is at hand, and the struggle must deepen ere the victory be achieved. Take unto thee, then, the whole armour of GoD, that thou mayest be able to withstand in the evil day; and having done ALL to stand.—for thou hast been faithful indeed over a few things, but patience hath not yet had her perfect work in thee,-that thou mayest be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Wherefore, think . it not strange concerning the peculiar and fiery trial which is even now to try thee, as though some strange thing happened unto thee; but rejoice, inasmuch as thou shalt be a partaker of My sufferings, that when My glory shall be revealed, thou mayest be glad also with exceeding joy.

Child. Beloved Master, surely some great peril is at hand? for lo, Thou art very near to me! I know indeed that Thou art ever near me, and that through all the alleluias of the myriad scraphs, chanting in adoration round Thy throne of glory, Thou hearest still the faintest sigh that riseth up from my weak heart to Thee,—and notest every lear that falls from my poor human eyes, amid all the flood of radiance that is round Thee in the Home of Light unquenchable. But ofttimes Thou hast willed to veil Thy Presence from me, that I more ardently might seek Thee, and feel after Thee, if haply I might find Thee. And so it was that even now I saw Thee not, and faith alone went on before me, like a beacon light, guiding me to Thy pure abiding-place; as once that wondre as star, beaming so glorious in the Eastern skies, I'd on the wise men to the holy spot where Thou didst lie, a new-born King, receiving Thy first homage, in Thy spotless mother's all-adoring love! But now I seem to have a deeper certainty than faith · alone can give, of Thine exceeding nearness; for a little while since, though I heard no footstep, and knew not of Thy coming, suddenly I felt a thrilling sense of wakening love and joy unspeakable, as the awful sweetness of Thy conscious Presence stole into my inmost soul; and I straightway knew that there was One beside me, Whose Form was

like unto the Son of GoD! How is it, then, most gracious Master, that Thou dost especially vouch-safe Thyself unto me now? hath it not ever been Thy mercy to draw near when danger menaced me?

Bibine Master, Dost thou remember how, once upon a desert shore I stood at even, and watched in the midst of the sea, the ship with My disciples? I saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary to them; and about the fourth watch of the night I came unto them, walking upon the sea, and they were troubled when they saw Me, supposing Me to be a spirit. But immediately I talked to them, and said, Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid. And I went up unto them into the ship, and caused the wind to cease. And so, in like manner, from the calm shores of the land of everlasting life, have I watched thee, My beloved child, toiling through the waves of this troublesome world. And now, because the night draweth on apace, and the darkest hour is ever before the morning, I have come to thee upon the billows, that I may be near thee in thy time of peril; and behold I am with thee in the ship! Mine Arm is round thee, and My left Hand is under thy head; for thou hast yet to enter on deep waters, where the stormy wind and tempest shall assail thee, and where, as a reed, thou

wouldest be broken and driven of the blast from before My Face for ever, were I not near, to strengthen thee with might in the inner man. That great tribulation is advancing on thee, out of which thou must come to walk with Me in white.

Behold, now must I prove thy love for Me, by some surer means than any which have tried thee yet. Some new and powerful test must seal th thee, yea, one sharper than a two-edged swoil; for know, My child, that except this thy holy leve be now the sovereign power in thy soul, subduing utterly all other feelings and affections, and causing thee to hate, if need be, thy dearest ties, yea, and thine own life also, for My sake, it shall not serve thee in thine hour of need, when the great day of My wrath shall come. By it, the very essence of thy union with Me, must thou cling to Me throughout eternity; but if there abide within thee yet, one shade of lingering tenderness For thine own self, or others, which might cause thee to shrink back from doing homage unto Me, Ty even the last extreme of mortal anguish, it shall be found, when thy soul comes to stand before Me. naked and shivering, stripped of all fleshly veil, that these treacherous feelings, which seem to thee just now but soft and weak, possessed of little power, are in reality most deep-set cankers! And fearfully will they paralyze and weaken thee, when tho

hast need to concentrate the strength of nothing less than a love supreme and undivided, in thy one strong, clinging grasp on Me,—that grasp wherewith thou must be enabled still to hold thee fast by Me in calm security, when, in the tremendous hour of judgment and of execution on a guilty world, the universe shall be convulsed, the heavens depart as a burning scroll, and the earth reel to and fro, and be utterly broken down and dissolved. Art thou prepared, then, to stand some keen, soul-piercing test, which shall so try thy love, that thou mayest know if indeed it will be found faithful and approved by Me in the day of Ire and mourning?

Chilo. Yea, LORD; better that the sharpest knife should probe my spirit now, and cut out every spot diseased, whilst still the blood that from Thine altar flows may cleanse and heal the wound, than that I should perish hereafter in the awful fire, which shall try every man. But O, my LORD, how is it that a test is still required? Hath not my whole life been a trial? Have I not left all, and followed Thee?

Bivine Master. Thou hast heard My voice, through all the din and turmoil of the world, calling to thee, in the accents of that Love which is a part of Mine eternity, and thou couldest not resist the sweetness and the power with which I spake.

Thou hast arisen and come after Me, upon the dark and thorny path, truly and well, O child, bee loved of My heart; but surely thou canst not think, that in thy few light sufferings by the way, thou hast yet drunk of the cup which I have drunk of, or been baptized with the baptism that I have been baptized with! Yet lo, because of thy very faithfuln'ss, must I bring thee now to this; that as I rose, pang by pang, to the torturing climax of My Passion, and thence passed on to resurrection and to glory; so thou, receiving sorrows after sorrows at My hands, mightest ascend unto the one ordeal of peculiar and most keen temptation, which riust try each one on the earth, ere they with Me can rise, and enter into that City bathed with Light Divine, where the countless ages of eternity as they roll on," shall never behold the shedding of one single tear, or catch the echo of one faintest sigh. All as out all

Chilo. Lord, I am in Thy hands; do with me as seemeth good to Thee. I know that, whether the angel of Thy Presence cometh unto me in shining robes, that glitter white as snow,—with the palm of victory, and the golden crown upheld to lure me on; or clad in mourning garments, bearing only the scourge for mine offences, and the knife to try my weak heart to the quick; still, whatever be Thine aspect, in Thy love and in Thy pity only dost Thou come,—to redeem me out of

darkness into Thy marvellous Light. And I know that, in all my affliction, which Thine own chastisement doth work in me. Thou art afflicted. and by this very means dost bear and carry me unto the Mount of God, as in the days of old Thou leddest Thy people Israel; and so do I trust. through endless ages, that Thou shalt be my SAVIOUR. But O, tell me, I beseech Thee, by what test art Thou about to try me now? Surely that baptism with which Thou wert baptized, whom it became to fulfil, not only all righteousness, but all sorrow, was a baptism of Blood? and the cup which Thou drankest, was it not the cup of the Fury of the Eternal FATHER, of the fierceness of His Wrath, which Thou didst fill from the wine-press of His Anger, when Thou hadst trodden it alone? What part, then, can I have in the awful woe that was heaped upon Thy Sinless Head, O Thou, Who alone, in all eternity, hadst power to lay Thy one hand on the Throne of GoD, and Thy other on the soul of men?

Bitine Master. My child, the mighty angels who lie bowed beneath My footstool in the highest heaven, have desired to look into that Mystery of Sorrow, and have not been able; and yet it is given to the very weakest of My little ones on earth, whom I gather to My Bosom, to be made partakers of it, in their measure and degree. Thou

sayest well, that Mine was a baptism of Agony and Death; and therefore I say unto thee, each one who would be with Me in My kingdom, must come to share it, by the slaughter in violence and pain, of the hope, the joy, the treasure, sure of existence in some shape, whatsoever it may be, which lies so near their heart, that it is entwined in the very fibres of it, and thereby chokes the springs of that Pure Life Divine, which demands an uninterrupted passage there. It is as I have told thee; every living soul, ere they can pass the grave and gate of death, must have their faithfulness towards Me proved by some one searching and peculiar trial, which flesh and blood could not endure, except it were given them of My FATHER; and this shall be the sign that they have been so tried, and not found wanting, if, when they appear before Me, stripped of mortal clay, with the glowing flame of their sacred love thereby revealed in its undying ardour, My piercing eyes shall discern within them, as a witness to that love, one deep, unutterable suffering, actually born from it, and partaking of its flery nature, inasmuch as it hath eaten into their very life and being, with an agony like to that of a consuming flame.

Child. Sorrow is, then, the proof which Thou seekest, gracious LORD? But surely I have given it to Thee abundantly? Have I not suffered

many things because of Thee, not grudgingly, but with a cheerful heart? I say not this to glory, O meek and lowly Master; but Thou dost speak as though some special trial were needful to the perfection of Thine elect, and I cannot discern what this may be, since already from Thy hands each one receives his daily cross; and ofttimes heavy chastisements besides,-when Thou dost send Thine angel death to take away the treasures we love best, or lay upon us sickness and infirmity, or still more bitter, call on us to bear, as Thou hast done, the betrayal and the desertion of the friends we trusted; -by all these trials, and many more, we learn to know the sons whom Thou receivest, and dost Thou yet seek a sign, in some peculiar chastening still unknown to me?

Divine Master. My child, the chastisements thou speakest of are but veiled blessings, which are shrouded truly in a veil so thin, that even in their darkest moment the light of My love and mercy beameth through them; and forasmuch as they are seen to come expressly by My will, and there is no power to resist or to refuse them, it is ever found that there is a very sweetness in the passive resignation which mutely doth receive them, and boweth down beneath My gentle hand, that is laid indeed upon the stricken head to bless, that most it seems to smite. Now, it is a grievous

error to suppose that these inevitable sorrows, the medicine wherewith I heal the sickness of My people, are actual persecutions suffered for My sake, according as it is written, "All that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS shall suffer persecution;" and it displeaseth Me when I behold them make a boast unto themselves, that they have given proofs of love for Me, in the mere endurance of woes, from which they have no power to escape,or that, by the simple fact of suffering, they have a claim to future recompense, as if they had donesome meritorious deed of their spontaneous effort. Herein do they greatly deceive themselves; for this is not that persecution of the natural will by their own regenerate spirit, of which My righteous servant spake; nor can this be the deep, unutterable woe which must stand forth in the day of searching, in testimony of their love and their undoubted truth.

Hearken now, my child, and understand, whilst I do show to thee the special trial, by which thou must be made to share the sufferings of those, whose constancy was written in their blood; for thou rememberest how My beloved servant saw, beneath the altar of the heavenly tabernacle, the souls of them that were slain for My Word, and he heard them crying with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O LORD, Holy and True, dost Thou

not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" and he saw white robes given to every one of them, and heard how it was told them they should rest yet a little season, till their fellow servants also, and their brethren that must be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. Now these their fellow servants, who should be with them, and yet not be permitted to escape unto their rest like the other brethren, through the passage made by a murderous sword, must suffer death in their hearts, that they too may fulfil the measure of their faithfulness, and receive with the martyred saints the crown of life. Nor speak I this of the death unto sin, of which all My people must be partakers, as the inevitable result of their life in Me, -but of the slaving, once for all, sooner or later, in their career, of some beloved hope, or love, or dream, which hath been to them the dearest and most cherished, the very joy of life, and which ofttimes, for that same reason, and by its special nature, hath become a clog upon their heavenward feet, and an obstacle between their souls and Me.

On that day, when the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed, it will be found that, in the lives of every one of Mine elect, there has been some such intensely prized treasure, some hidden tenderness, some sweet affection and vision of delight, of whatsoever nature,—unknown, it may

be, to the world, in silence born, and in silence slain, which I have demanded as a sacrifice for I y love's sake, to be the test and pledge thereof, and that because I deem it hurtful to them; for the e are many blessings which I freely give, that must in thankfulness be held and cherished. But mark, I take not the beloved joy away, though it impedes My close abiding in their souls; themselves must immolate it unto Me. Thou knowest, when I told My disciples that, if need be, they should sacrifice to Me the right hand and the right e. I said not, "I will cut it off, or pluck it out," but "Do thou cut it off, and do thou pluck it out," thus teaching all that I would have them to be the executioners of their own joys.

They must imitate the constancy of Abraham, My friend, and make their hearts an altar, whereon to bind and offer up their darling hope, perchance their only one, but unto whom no unexpected succour shall be sent; for when the blow is derit, and the memory of the dead joy is cold and mou neful, as the thought of a corpse within its tomb, then doth there pass into their souls that which I labour to procure for them on earth, if they require its discipline,—even a desolation so utter and so unsupportable, that with dim weeping eyes and bursting heart, they stagger to My Cross, and lay them down beneath it with an undivited

longing, henceforth to know no other happiness, in time or in eternity, save My pure Love alone!

Chile. Oh LORD, what dreary depths of suffering hast Thou showed me! surely not many on this earth can so endure? must all men pass through waters of such exceeding bitterness, ere they attain Thy Painless Home of Light?

Bibine Master. I say not that none, can so much as pass that Blissful Threshold, except they do endure the loftiest and most searching trials: for these are of the nature of that constancy which I have declared long since, all men cannot receive, save they to whom it is given,-but 1 do say unto thee, that blessed, blessed, yea thrice blessed, with all the glories of eternity, shall he be, to whom it is permitted to attain the highest stage of devotion and suffering on earth, for high shall be his seat in Heaven! and he who follows Me thus close in sorrow here, as close shall follow Me in bliss hereafter. Blessed, I say, is he whom I allure to slay the treasure I deem hurtful to him. though dearer than his very life; for the soul thus emptied of all other longings or desires, will I fill through everlasting ages with the never-failing riches of My Love ineffable, a torrent of pleasure for evermore! Lable tricove has become the bridge

But all men have not the same gift, nor are

called to the same endurance. Some lofty souls there are, who so entirely desire the sweetn'ss of My Presence only, that they with soler in purpose do utterly renounce all touch or taste of human joys, and to that end commit themselves unto the flames of such an ardent, pure devotion, that they are enabled, albeit with the agony of burning, to consume the natural impulses and wishes, which might have made them crave for this earth's hopes and pleasures. Of such are those who consecrate themselves to Me in Virgin lives, that they may be holy both in body and spirit, and care only for the things of their LORD, how they may please Me, and these shall bloom as Lilies, pure and snow-white, in My Garden of Immortal Flowers. Of such again, are others who in holy poverty have sought, and found, the traces of M footsteps, and they shall shine amid the brightest and rarest of the living gems, upon My Glorious Crown, in the day when I make up My jewels; for all these, even in this world of dark defilement, have attained unto a purity and love, so undivided and entire, that their passionless spirits are like some translucent lake that lies for ever gathering in its bosom all the Light of Heaven only, and hath no-part in that dim earth which binds it round on every side.

Yet, My child, as I have ever said to thee, thou

mayest not measure out thine offering unto Me, by what others have done or left undone, but as thou ascendest, step by step, towards the Eternal Home, where sits enthroned thy human nature taken into the Godhead by My power, be it thine to seek out, even to the last moment of thine earthly life, what is the utmost height of pure devotion, to which I have called thine own self. Remember that if thou fall short of this, each time thou utterest in prayer the words I taught thee, "Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come," thou dost most fearfully condemn thyself, for is it not a mockery to ask for that thou wilt not seek to promote, even unto the uttermost, within the harrow compass of thine own heart and spirit? thou wouldest shudder couldst thou know, how many times that awful prayer comes up to Me, uttered by the careless lips that therein sound their own dark sentence! for the Kingdom whose coming they would hasten by their supplications is that empire of holy souls, from which all who serve Me by word and not by deed, must be excluded. Look then into thyself, My child, and see if thou retain not yet unconsciously, some lingering obstacle to Mine entire abiding in thee, with all that closeness of Divine mysterious union which I desire, and which nought throughout eternity shall ever mar; truly each day and hour have I taught

thee, that the way of the Holy Cross must be in suffering,—but is there no crowning sacrifice of sorrow which yet must set the seal, on the truth of thy devotion unto Me?

Chile. LORD, Thou knowest; teach me Thy will, and give me strength on earth to do it, as it is done in Heaven. I know that I have borne the burden and heat of the day; I have toiled since the morning tide, and now am well-nigh spent, for I thought that the night was near at hand; and I know that wheresoever I have gone, Thy Witness Suffering hath walked with me; for as Thou hast ever taught me, gracious LORD, I have found, that to bear Thy Cross in spirit and in truth, is truly and indeed to suffer; but whether Thou hast set Thy mark upon me, in some such deep and sacred wound, as that of which Thou speakest, judge Thou; and if I have not passed the ordeal yet, let me, if need be, be brought into it now; smite, smite, and spare not us the reside

Me discreetly, therefore will I grant thee, first on earth to hear, all that My Love for thee demands, and hereafter in Heaven to know, all that thine for Me shall gain. Tell Me then, O though who hast desired to love Me with a perfect Love is there not yet within thy life a joy which maketh earth too dear to thee, and sorely him.

dereth thy growth in grace? it mattereth not what shape it doth assume, if this poison be within it, whereby thou shalt know its hurtfulness, viz., if it causeth thee to feel, that to live in Me is not the all of life for thee, nor yet that thou couldest deem it only gain to die! If but a little it doth gild the world, so that thou art content to dwell within it, and faintest not with very fervent desire for the Courts of My Celestial House, then hath it come between thy soul and that pure Home, prepared for thee from the foundations of the world. Speak, My child, and take heed that thy lips utter no guile; for I know what is in man, and have understood thy thoughts long before.

Spirit, or whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I go then from Thy Presence? Thou hast searched me out and known me; Thou art about my bed and about my path, and spiest out all my ways; yea, Thou hast looked into the deep of my heart, further than I could see myself; and lo, as Thou spakest to me even now, silently Thy Spirit showed me, that truly amid all the toil, and ofttimes anguish, of my service offered unto Thee, there hath been an earthly solace brightening all, a human joy, which was the sunshine of my mortal life, and which sometimes made this earth seem fair unto my doating eyes, as in its

Eden time of innocence. I do confess, that I have had an all-sufficient consolation in this world, one only hope of happiness on this side of the grave, but wilt Thou take it from me, Gracious Master? Oh is it not a little one? no foul and wicked pleasure, but a cherished resting place on earth, where I have found a sweet repose?

Bibine Master. Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His Head, and wilt thou have a resting place, a sweet repose within the world that denied a shelter to thy Suffering. Mournful LORD? Said I not ever unto thee that on this earth thou mayest not linger, nor be content, nor seek to lay thee down? Remember those words, "there REMAINETH therefore a rest for the people of GoD;" not here, not here, but in that Paradise of pure delights, where I have gone to prepare a place for those that love Me. Oh: My child, take heed that no dream beguile thee! that joy which thou unconsciously hast nourished side by side, with thy true love for Me, is but a temptation, like to that which overtook My people in the Wilderness, when they journeyed to the Promised Land, and gradually the lust came on them to return, unto the fleshpots of Egypt; if thou dost let it share with My Cross. all thine energies and hopes, and thoughts, too

soon shall it be to thee as a drink of deadly wine, lulling thee to slumber, when the very morn of thine eternal day is breaking, and the goal about to burst on thine enraptured eyes. Oh rouse thee, sacrifice thy treasure! up, cast it from thee! take the sword of the Spirit, and cut it from thy heart; strip thee; make thee destitute; come unto Me, wounded and weeping, homeless and joyless, outcast and alone; come in tears, which none will wipe away; come in pain, which no man will relieve; come in agony, which all shall pass unheeding, and I—I will give thee rest!

if I abandon it, how desolate shall I not be!

Bitine Master. Desolate? when I am with thee; is it desolation that there should be no sights in all the universe for thee, save only My fixed look of love unutterable? no sound save My deep Voice of thrilling sweetness, whispering ever, "Lo, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me?" Is it desolation, to lie cradled in the Everlasting arms, as a child upon its Mother's Breast? Child. It is enough, good LORD; Thy will be done.

Bibine Master. And it is done! in the same moment that even now thy heart conceived this blessed resolution, to abandon all to Me, thy

dearest and thy best,—that joy for ever departed from thee, for henceforth thou thyself wilt count it, as a thing accursed from thee, and never more wilt thou let it come with all its sweetness to thy breast. Child of My sorrow, is it peace?

Chile. My head is laid upon Thy Pierced Feet; my heart is beating faint against the rock where I have stretched myself; my hands are bruised beneath my weight, for they are crossed upon my breast in dumb submission, and it is peace, perfect and abiding peace.



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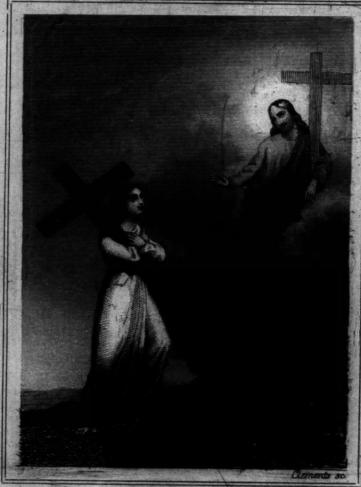
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THE DIVINE MASTER.



X. ARDENT LOVE.

London J. Masters, Aldereg als & New Bond St.



CHAPTER X.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS IN DEATH.

Child. Out of the deep do I call unto Thee. O LORD; LORD, hear my voice, for I am brought very low. My soul is full of trouble; my flesh and my heart faileth; the sight of mine eves is gone from me, and my strength hath altogether vanished. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and my limbs also are so feeble, that they no more uphold me in the way; I am fain to lie down, as one whose day of toil is over, and who seeketh now to rest, being very faint and weary. But O, what means this weakness and this dim bewilderment? for I feel as though some mighty change were working in me. The former things are passed away, and behold, all things are becoming new! I see no more the world, and the glories of it, as they appear unto the eyes of mortal man, but in a light so clear and awful;

surely it beameth from eternity itself! How vain and perishing hath that world become, thus suddenly unveiled to me! how is its pomp brought down unto the dust, with the noise of its mirth, and the din of its contentions! how is it fallen, that deceiveth the nations, and maketh itself to be the desire of many hearts! The things which were dainty and goodly in it, dissolve away like a thin froth that is driven of the storm, and all its treasures are as smoke, which the hand cannot grasp, though they be of a comely form. Lo! the earth hasteth and passeth away like a shadow; it may be, that I shall never look on its sunshine and its loveliness again,—that I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world: for the day) of the years of my pilgrimage, are rising up before me in the mirror of the past, and I see them as it were a tale that is told, and there is an awful whisper going through my soul, which seemeth to say unto me that, Time shall be for me no longer. What does all this portend? Am I about to enter into the dark valley? O GoD, is this death Pun to sear and antimi ago I van O

Divine Master. Rise up, My child, My faithful one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the shadows depart of thy mortal life, and the day is dawning that never shall fade. It is past—it is gone—the dark time.

of thy conflict and trial, when the Sun of thy soul was obscured by the clouds of defilement and sin. No more shall the tempest of fierce human passion. or the storm of temptation, assail thee with might; no more shall the bleak winds of suffering, chill thy weak heart, nor thy tears fall fast as that winter rain! but thou shalt see the Light which maketh eternal summer in the City of GoD, and the flowers that bloom on the deathless shore. The time of the singing of angels is come for thee, and the voice of the scraphim is heard in that land. Thou hast wrestled with sin, till the breaking of day; thou hast toiled all night, but the morn is nigh. Arise up, then, My child, My faithful one, and come away; let us haste and begone, for the dawn is bright on the everlasting hills. I but some and any war as yet as bout prome

Child. The voice of my Beloved! O, how sweet is the sound! how softly it allayeth the wild strife of my heart! It stilleth my fears, it calmeth my pain, as of old it rebuked the wind and the sea.

O, my LORD, in the time past of my life, there was a great and strong wind that rent my soul, and brake in pieces all my hopes in this world, that they might not impede the work of Thy grace;—but Thou wert not in the wind, for I thought to reach Thine unveiled Presence when it had passed

by, but I found, that I had not yet endured to the end of my trial. And after the wind there was an earthquake; all the fair things of earth I had sought to repose in, gave way beneath my feet, and I knew of what dust they were made; and I looked for Thee to fill my longing desire, but Thou wert not in the earthquake! Then was there a fire, the searching flame of suffering, fierce and intense, yet willingly met, that I might pass through it, to the very shelter of Thine all-loving heart; but Thou wert not in the fire, and I still lived on. And now there is a still small voice—

Bivine Master. And I am here! Thy Master is come, and calleth for thee. Thou hast entered indeed into the valley of the shadow of death; thou shalt no more go back to walk with thy fellow men in the land of the living. But fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy Goo! Behold there is an highway in this vale of stillness and gloom,—a way that is called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but the redeemed shall walk in it, and thereby shall My ransomed ones return, and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; for they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Child. But is this for me? if the righteous

scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? This, then, is death, and after death the judgment! O LORD, an horrible dread hath overwhelmed me; Thou Who hast been the SAVIOUR, shalt now become the Judge! Thou, the Merciful, the Gentle, the Long-Suffering, the very Friend, tender as a mother, pitying as a brother, caring for me with a love that passed all the loves of earth, shalt soon be set, awful in holiness, upon the Throne of Justice, for judgment and for condemnation! Thou shalt not bear the sword in vain, and I, with all the sins unveiled, that now are coming in upon my memory like a flood, shall stand before Thee to receive the sentence of that eternity which I have moulded to myself for weal or woe, in that brief span of life now gone for ever! O Lamb of God, Who shall be able to stand in that great day of Thy wrath P and lo, for me it is near-it is near, and hasteth greatly; a day of trouble and distress; a day of wasteness and desolation; a day of darkness, and gloominess, of clouds, and thick darkness; a day when the mighty men shall cry bitterly, and call on the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of Him That sitteth on the throne. timir limital for thee shall olyain lov

LORD, my LORD, in the time of my strife and trial, when my heart was desolate, and none

sought to comfort me, the thought and hope of this my last hour was ofttimes my dearest solace. The struggle with this mortal life hath been very sore; this life, that, with its fair allurements and its soft affections, its passions and desires, was as a cruel tyrant unto me; and there hath been strange rest and sweetness, in the blessed certainty that I should one day say of it, "How hath the oppressor ceased! how has the weary escaped from its power!" And I have turned from the hearts that would not harbour me on earth, because I. loved Thy Name, O LORD, to think with joy upon the shelter of that grave, where I prayed that I might sleep in Thee! Yet, now that it is come in deep reality,-now that the dust reclaims her dust, and the Judge standeth at the door, my flesh doth but recoil with horror, from the worm and the corruption, and my spirit is even as it were consumed with terror unspeakable, before the prospect of Thy great tribunal! so that now there is this cry alone within my heart. "O Goo. how dreadful is this death, and after death the judgment!" blaner var beser bus mounds Richievill

Bibine Master. Death must ever seem to come, with pain and terror unto man, for it is the wages of sin; but the gift of GoD is eternal life through Me, and therefore I will be its plague. My child, over this dark and awful change, as on

every stage of man's career, there shineth, for My redeemed, a light serene and glorious, in the one truth of their union mystical with Me :-- whereby this Death, that was to them only the appointed punishment, the avenger of justice, the dread fulfilment of the wrath of God,-hath now become an angel messenger, that in My Name beareth to them the salutation of peace, and causing the chains of their earthly bondage to fall away, straightway leadeth them forth, from the prison of the flesh, to be with Me for ever, as I am with the FATHER. Remember, that I have told thee many times. I lived thy life on earth, that thou mightest live in Mine on high; and therefore, now is it thine, if thou art one with Me, to follow Me whithersoever I have gone, without a doubt or fear. Lo, My deathbed was the Cross! and wouldest thou shrink, from bearing thine to this last station, and hanging on it by My side through these dark hours? or dread the angel hands that soon shall come to take thee down, and lay thee in My place of rest a little while, till I shall call thy spirit thence, and raise thy mouldering body, still a part of Mine through sacramental life, to glorify them both together, in likeness of Mine eternal glory Pycovicia differential tentanto any an

Understand and know, that death as it now is, for the true members of the Church, and for those who are yet in bondage to the Prince of this world, hath its type in that great sea of whelming waters, wherein I led Mine elder Israel of old. They passed in safety through that deep flood to the promised land, because they followed Me, Who went before them in the fiery pillar; but the dwellers in Egyptian darkness, as thou knowest, sunk to destruction in the selfsame hour!

Child. O Thou, Who art the First-Begotten of the dead .- I could not dare to doubt the perfect blessedness of all who sleep in Thee, whom Thou shalt bring with Thee in the day of Thy triumph, and their resurrection; but can I so much as dare to hope that I could ever be among that glorious white-robed company? They from the dust shall awake, and sing, even the new song which Thou shalt teach them, and which on earth they could not know; for they were far from their native home in heaven, and how should they sing the LORD's song in a strange land? But, O LORD CHRIST, Whom I have pierced with many a sin, shall not I rather be among those kindreds of the earth, who shall wail because of Thee? For lo, even as Thou hast said, the time of my probation is for ever past; the night is come when I no more can work. And what have I wrought in the days past of my life, wherein Thou badest me work

out my salvation in fear and trembling? Alas! I can but remember, all that I have done to grieve Thy Holx Spirit, and provoke Thy wrath and indignation against me! Each thought, or word, or deed, in which I ever have offended Thee, is present with me now, and my sins have taken such hold upon me, that I cannot look up to hope.

O, awful Life, that holdest eternity in thy grasp, and makest of it what thou wilt, if only I could have thee once again, how far better would I use thee! But thou art gone from me, as an arrow that parteth the air, and leaveth no sign where it passeth through. LORD, LORD, this is my terror, that my condemnation shall be in the very greatness of the privileges which I have enjoyed. On Thy side, truly, nothing hath been wanting; no gift of mercy, or means of strength, the richest. deepest, fullest, hath been withholden from me: and hath Thy sacramental grace but flowed into my soul as into a broken cistern, that retained it not, but let it run to waste upon the stony ground? Oh when I come to plead before Thee that I have eaten and drunk in Thy Presence, at Thy holy altar, many times; shall this be Thine awful answer, " Depart from Me, thou that hast worked iniquity?"

Divine Master. In life and in death, whilst that dread veil yet hangs before the mysteries of My

judgment-seat, which shall be torn asunder at Mine appearing, even as at the departing of My soul, the Temple's veil was rent in twain, there is but one thought, which can sustain My people, in the fearful uncertainty of their eternal doom, -uncertain they must and will be, to the latest moment of their mortal span; for he were furthest from My glorious rest, who dared believe that he was worthy of it! and rather they do tremble more abundantly, whose heritage is most secure; since the brighter My love beams within their souls, so much the clearer, by its light, they see the blackness of their sins. But this incertitude were too tremendous, for their agony of longing and of fear, were it not, as I have said, that there is one most solemn thought, arising from the depths of truth eternal, which keepeth them in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed thereon. It is the sure conviction, awful, yet calm, that whatsoever be their sentence, yea, though it were everlasting destruction from My Presence for ever, still it would be the decree only of MY PERFECT JUSTICE! I am the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever; Perfect in love, Perfect in equity, and Equal in both. Behold them in the Cross, combined! I loved not, so as to betray My Justice, nor so remembered justice only, that I forgot My Love. And since they know, that all this Love hath

done was superabundant to their full salvation. had they willed to meet the close embrace of My dear Mercy, they feel, if they are lost, that I condemn them not, but that, by their own act, they are condemned already. Nor could they wish their punishment to be averted, by Myswerving (were this possible) one hair's breadth even, from Mine immutable justice. Such an idea, were one of blasphemy and horror unto them, whose adoration for Me, lives on My Perfection. Thus it cometh to pass that My true people, loving Mine Eternal Holiness, more than they love their own everlasting bliss, do find, in the certainty of My never-failing Righteousness, even should its operation slay themselves, a strange and solemn rest, which enableth them to wait, with meek submission, the sentence of their dread eternity.

Child. LORD, Thou ever readest aright the heart of man! for such a peace, awful indeed, yet full of a mysterious sweetness, I have myself found in this deep thought many times, when, during my past life, I have compelled my shuddering soul to contemplate the vision of the Judgment. Only, just now, all confidence of whatsoever kind seemed scared, before the sudden prospect of that fearful ordeal, with scarce an hour between me and the grave, where no place for repentance shall be found. But now I will repose once more, in the

deep assurance, of Thine unapproachable Purity in Justice and in Truth, whereby I shall be judged in equity; and waste no more these last most precious moments, in torturing speculations on my yet hidden doom. These little fleeting instants, into which my all of life is gathered up, I must hasten to give them every one, to make such preparation, as may yet be permitted unto me.

Thou Lamb of God, That takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on me even now! help me in this my last extremity! show me how I may prepare! Soon shall the cry of Thy swift coming, O most glorious Bridegroom, pierce for me the very cerements of death, and I shall behold Thy Bridal-chamber decked, the tabernacle which Thou shalt make with men, and see Thy Bride coming down out of heaven, adorned to meet her husband, in garments white and clean, the righteousness of saints. Blessed indeed are they, who shall be called unto Thy Marriage Supper; but woe, woe to me, if the wedding garment Thou didst give to me, be soiled with uneffaced stains! O, show me, then, how even yet, in some degree, I may strive to brighten the robe of my soul, once white as snow, in baptism, lest I be cast into utter darkness in that hour! O teach me how I may gain a little strength, ere I depart, and am no more seen!

Bibine Master. Thou doest well tomake good speed, in using those few precious moments, the last poor fragments of the treasure I have given thee, which thou hast offtimes squandered with such reckless folly; and forasmuch as I Who love My own, do love them to the end, thou shalt find that I have provided in My Church for man's departing, certain holy means, whereby they may be strengthened for the dread encounter of their naked, helpless soul with My all-piercing Gaze. First, then, hast thou betaken thee to the Tribunal of Penitence, there to make indeed fit preparation, for the swift approaching hour, when thou shalt be brought to the Bar of My Great Judgment? hast thou taken once more a solemn account of thy past life, and with tears of deep contrition disclosed them all afresh, to one of those whom I have set as watchmen, on the heights of My Spiritual Zion, that they may keep a faithful guard over the souls of men? and hast thou given such proofs of true repentance, that the absolving words of pardon have again been passed, uttered on earth and sealed in Heaven, if thou indeed wert upright in thy saying, and faithful in thy deep humiliation?

Chile. Good Master, most thankfully have I done this; yea, I could not choose but turn unto that ordinance of cleaning, more eagerly than

ever did the kingly leper, to wash in Jordan's sacred stream; for my soul, appalled by its swift approach unto Eternal Purity, was fired with most vehement desire to efface, by any means, the stains of her corruption, ere she reached the sinless shore, beyond the grave—and without the Holy anointing of this Blessed Absolution, I know not how the shrinking spirit ever could endure the first searching Breath of the pure air of Eternity!

O LORD, in the vigour of health and hope, when men for lust of life, do seek to crush the remembrance of their dying hour, they may not fear to scoff at this, the sacred means of Thine appointment, for the pardon of their sins. Even as Naaman at the first, scorned the washing that was to make him clean, because it seemed to him that no great thing was given him to do, so they may despise the plain command, to humble themselves before the power committed unto man, and say with mocking anger of Thine anointed Priest, "Is not this man our fellow-servant and our equal, that he should pretend to do this thing?" therein catching, as it were, the spirit of those who cried out against Thyself of old, saying, "This Man speaketh blasphemy; who can forgive sins save GoD only; is not this the Carpenter's Son?" But, O Thou Great High Priest, when on their bed of death they lie as I do now, and when their memory, endowed with fear-

ful retrospective power, drags up the thronging crowds of sins done in the flesh, each one, as it were, a living thing with a living voice, wherewith to call down vengeance on them,-there is no longer place for this most miserable pride and sophistry, beside the fearful looking for of Judgment that overwhelmeth them! then it is truly that all must turn and cling to this blest ordinance, as drowning men unto the spar in mercy sent, and with most ardent gratitude rejoice, that as Thou hadst indeed power on earth to forgive sins, so now Thou wouldest not leave us comfortless, albeit departed in the Glory of Thine Ascension, but hast ordained the exercise, of this Thy Sovereign Right of Pardon, in the Hands of Thy Representatives within the Church, with whom Thou hast promised to abide, even unto the end of the world. Verily, Death comes unto the man with Truth in his right hand, and disperses for ever all deceits of the world, or flesh, or Devil, that would strive, as in this instance, to make Thy plain decrees of none effect.

Divine Master. Thus far hast thou well done, My child, but hast thou further sought in this the last hour, which divides thee from the limitless duration of unending ages, to partake of that All-Wondrous Food, which alone can give thee Life Eternal? There be many that say, like those of

whom thou hast spoken even now, "How can this man give us bread here in the Wilderness?" Knowing that I Myself the Bread of Life, am gone into Heaven to sit at GoD's Right Hand, they dare to mistrust the awful channel, by which I have decreed, that My very Body and Blood should be conveyed to them, even in the land of this their exile. But I say unto thee, Woe be to them if they be not found in Me at My Coming! for upborne in My Bosom only, wherein I bore the rebukes of many people, can they ascend unto the Paradise of GoD; and how shall they enter into Me, to be as bone of My Bone, and flesh of My Flesh, except they eat Me, even as I commanded, and so live for ever?

respect, hath been the madness of Thy people; but for me I have been as one escaping for his life, and whither could I flee, even in the midst of Thy Church, the City of Refuge, which Thou hast provided for us on earth, but to the very Altar of Thy Presence, all sprinkled with Thy Blood? where Satan, the Accuser of the Brethren, could not dare to enter in and take me, be he never so hot in his pursuit. O Virgin Born, Very Gop, and no less Very Man, it hath been my mightiest help, my sweetest hope, in the deep terror of this death and this eternity, that I have been per-

mitted once again to receive Thy Very Self, in this Divinest Sacrament! If only I could dare believe that mine utter unworthiness, and the ripened corruption of my past evil days, no more to be redeemed in time, had not impeded the Reception of this All-Celestial Bread, I should not fear, good LORD, to enter even on the everlasting ages, in the strength thereof; for by this means should I then attain, most surely, the one thing which I long for with unspeakable desire, even to nestle close within Thy Sacred Heart for ever and for evermore!

Divine Master. Thou hast done what thou couldest in thine extremity; now leave the rest to Me; but time is speeding, and thy moments are numbered; thou must agree with thine adversary very quickly, lest he accuse thee to the Judge; hast thou taken heed before approaching to that Sacred Banquet, that no man had aught against thee, nor thou against any man? hast thou paid that thou owest, and dost thou forgive as thou wouldest hope to be forgiven?

Child. I am at peace with all men, LORD, so far as in me lies; yea, rather do I mourn for those I leave behind, to whom it hath been given me for Thy Dear Sake, to offer sympathy or comfort in this vale of misery; they weep as if to break my heart, because of the words I spake when Death

drew near, telling them that they should see my face no more.

Divine Master. If they loved thee, they would rejoice, because at length the last tears thou shalt ever shed, are stealing from thine eyes, grown dim with weeping, when none were near to note thy patient sorrow,—and the tired frame, so wasted with toil and bitter discipline unknown to all, save Him Who sees in secret, shall never more feel pain or weariness, nor shall the weary head, that throbbed so oft upon the cold ground in thine anguish of humiliation, be tortured with unrest again! If they loved thee, they would rejoice, as even now for thee that Love rejoiceth, which is strong as Death—yea, which hath trampled Death beneath his Feet, saying to him, "I am mightier than thou!"

My child, the day breaketh, and we must depart; the shadow of death is darkening on thine eyelids, and the radiance of earthly suns hath passed from them for ever; but the HAND that once opened the eyes of the blind is laid upon thine; and through thy soul, already trembling on the threshold of a new existence, the light of Eternity is dawning, ere yet the silver cord that binds thy mortal life is altogether loosed. Look upwhat seest thou?

Chilv. I see the worlds floating in the Infinite

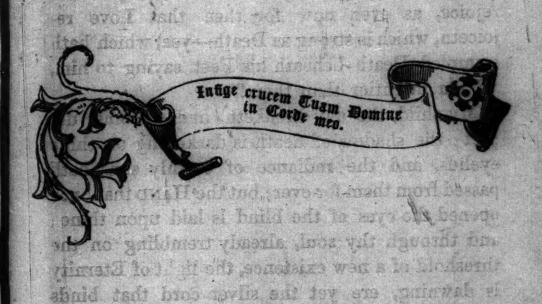
Glory of God, like motes in the sunshine—I see the centuries falling into the ocean of eternity, swift as the rain drops in summer.

Bivine Master. Look again — what seest thou?

Child. The Word—the Word is fulfilled! mine eyes behold the King in His Beauty. OH, God, Thou art Love!

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